RELIEF IN NEWARK, 1929-1933

by
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INTRODUCTION

Newark, New Jersey, in 1930, was a highly industrialized City with a population of 442,337.[1] Of this population, 45%, or 199,102 persons, were gainful workers in 1930.[2] Of the 199,102 workers, over 45%, or 90,644 were engaged in manufacturing industries. As an industrial center, Newark had continuous experience with unemployment and relief problems.

The effects of the depression of 1921-1922 had been felt in Newark, but like other cities throughout the country, it had been able to recover without Federal aid. From 1922 until 1927 economic conditions in Newark were favorable, but in 1927 there was a marked increase in unemployment.[3] From 1927 to 1928, and from 1928 to 1929, there were additional increases in the number of unemployed workers.

When the Great Depression began there was no existing Federal or State machinery to deal with the crisis. The burden of unemployment relief was to be carried, as in past depressions, by the municipalities. Also, it was hoped, conditions would return to normal in the municipalities without Federal or State aid, as in past depressions. It was only after two years of the depression that New Jersey gave any aid to Newark, and it took nearly four years after the October 1929 stock market crash for the first Federal aid to reach Newark.

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[1] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 15th Census of the U.S.: 1930, Vol. III, Pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 191.

[2] Ibid., 213.

[3] New Jersey Department of Labor, The Industrial Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 1 (May 1927), 41.

For the first three years and five months of the depression, public, private, and semi-official relief agencies in Newark carried the main burden of supplying financial and casework aid to the City's unemployed and needy. The efforts of these relief agencies in Newark, while certainly not heroic in nature, are worthy of close examination. They parallel the problems and solutions of industrial municipalities throughout the country during the early years of the depression prior to the massive Federal involvement in relief problems.

The scope of this study extends, for the most part, up to March 29, 1933. This date marks the termination of Newark's control over the administration and financing of relief in the City. Also, it was two months after this date that the first Federal aid reached New Jersey.

The best source for day to day developments involving relief agencies in Newark was, of course, a daily newspaper. Although there were at least three daily newspapers in Newark from 1929-1933, only one of these was used for this study. The Newark Evening News was by far the best of the dailies, and gave the most complete coverage of relief developments in Newark. Since it was necessary to go completely through every issue of the paper for almost three years, it would have been relatively unrewarding to duplicate this work for a paper of less stature than the Newark Evening News.

Other sources used in this study are published and unpublished records and reports of governmental and private agencies. These records and reports serve as statistical, factual, and elucidative buttresses

to events as traced in the Newark Evening News. Unfortunately certain of these sources in both governmental and private hands are not part of permanent collections and may be destroyed in the future.

CHAPTER ONE

PRIVATE RELIEF AGENCIES IN NEWARK, 1929-1930

At the outset of the depression Newark was both administratively and financially ill-prepared to meet the crisis. New Jersey did not begin grants-in-aid to its municipalities until October 1931,[1] and such funds were not made available to Newark until January 1932. It was not until May 1933 that New Jersey received its first relief money from the Federal Government, a $2,000,000 loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.[2] Thus, for especially the first several years of the depression, private relief agencies were an important factor in all phases of relief work.

It seems likely that even if sufficient municipal, State and Federal funds had been accessible to the growing number of unemployed in Newark, private relief agencies would still have been a vital factor in the City. This was because there were popular misconceptions regarding public relief which persisted throughout the early years of the depression. Clichés such as "individual initiative" and "self-reliance" were endlessly intoned in governmental and private circles. The unemployed, in many cases, were made to feel that if they accepted public relief they were admitting individual failure. Only as a last resort would such persons stand in line in the basement of Newark's City Hall asking aid from the Overseer of the Poor. Often either family or friend would

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[1] Douglas H. Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, A Report Prepared for the Committee on Social Security of the Social Science Research Council (Washington, 1938), 56.

[2] Ibid., 62.

direct a person in need to one of the sectarian or nonsectarian relief agencies in Newark. Most of these agencies stressed rehabilitation rather than direct material relief, although this latter factor was not ignored. It was thus much easier to go to the Mount Carmel Guild, the Jewish Social Service or the Urban League for a confidential interview than it was to risk possible humiliation at the Overseer of the Poor.

The most important private relief institution in Newark during the depression was the Welfare Federation of Newark. Established in 1923, the Federation coordinated and financed the activities of most of the City's private relief agencies. It was composed of both participating and associate members. Under the Charter of the Federation, participating members retained their individual programs but surrendered the right to supervise their budgets and collect funds. Associate members did not receive Federation funds but cooperated in gathering facts and statistics to improve service. During the depression the Federation was comprised of fifty-three participating members and about 100 associate members. The Federation gave no direct aid to applicants for help, but maintained a small staff to direct such applicants to agencies equipped to meet their individual needs. The two main arms of the Federation during the depression were the Social Service Exchange and the Community Chest.[3]

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[3] Joseph Farkas and Alfred Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Six of a Library Project of the Works Progress Administration of New Jersey, The Federal Writers' Project of New Jersey (New Jersey, 1939), unpaged.

The Social Service Exchange was a central index to the records of the social service agencies in Newark, whether or not these agencies were Federation members.[4] By the end of the depression its files contained approximately 300,000 cases,[5] cross-indexed according to name and street address, with pertinent data on each case. Whenever a welfare agency received an appeal it immediately checked with the Exchange by telephone or by printed form. The Exchange would then report the names of any other welfare agencies having record of the applicant, and these would be consulted before any new investigation or plan for service was made. This procedure was known as "clearing" through the Social Service Exchange.

It was estimated that approximately 65% of the inquiries to the Social Service Exchange involved families or individuals previously known to other agencies.[6] This would certainly indicate that the Exchange was a valuable asset to both public and private relief agencies in Newark in the elimination of duplication of work.

The Community Chest of the Welfare Federation of Newark was the main source of revenue for many of the fifty-three participating private welfare agencies in Newark. Through its annual pledge drives it collected

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[4] Welfare Federation of Newark, The Welfare Federation of Newark, 1836-1936 (Newark, 1936), 43.

[5] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Six. This is an extremely high figure when Newark's 1930 population of 442,337 is considered.

[6] Ibid.

about twice the amount that the participating members could have collected on an individual basis.[7] From 1929 through 1933, the Community Chest had the admirable record of collecting over 95% of its pledges.[8] Also, the expenses of running the annual campaigns were very small, averaging 5 1/4% of the amount collected from 1929 through 1933.[9]

The fifty-three agencies of the Federation receiving Community Chest funds were placed into four categories - general welfare, child welfare, hospitals and health, and youth service. General welfare interests us here, since agencies in this category provided either temporary or case work (rehabilitation and/or material relief) aid to individuals and families. The more important general welfare agencies belonging to the Federation were the Red Cross, Children's Aid Society, Conference of Jewish Charities, Newark Female Charitable Society, Salvation Army, Social Service Bureau, Urban League, and the Goodwill Home and Rescue Mission. The only major private welfare agency in Newark not a participating member of the Welfare Federation was the Associated Catholic Charities. In an average depression year, approximately 35,000 individuals and families registered with the general welfare agencies other than with the Associated Catholic Charities.[10]

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Welfare Federation of Newark, Annual Report, 1939, 8.

[9] Welfare Federation of Newark, Annual Reports, 1930 - 1934.

[10] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number One.

For the fiscal year November 1, 1929 through October 31, 1930, the Community Chest raised $1,153,142 (9% above the 1928-1929 collection).[11] Of this amount $584,277 went to the major participating general welfare agencies of the Federation (7% above the figure for 1928-1929).[12] It may be estimated that approximately $80,000 was distributed by these agencies for material relief to the needy in 1929, and about $120,000 in 1930.[13] During 1929 and 1930 the demand on welfare agencies grew, but until November 1930 (when the first real dip of the depression took place) these demands were for the most part met. The increase in services rendered by private welfare agencies from 1928 to 1929, and from 1929 to 1930, were minuscule when compared to the increase from 1930 and 1931, and from year to year thereafter. However, to better understand the great contributions made by private welfare agencies beginning with the winter of 1930-1931, it is important to first examine the makeup of the more important of these agencies, and their accomplishments prior to 1931.

The most important of the participating family welfare agencies of the Federation was the Social Service Bureau. The avowed purpose of the Bureau was to prevent serious social breakdowns through early contacts with families in distress. Through its trained caseworkers, the Bureau provided individuals and families with advice aimed at their social

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[11] Welfare Federation of Newark, Certified Audit Reports, n.d., unpaged.

[12] Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments, n.d., unpaged.

[13] Newark Evening News, April 13, 1933, 19. This article gave figures for 1928, 1931 and 1932. Hereinafter the Newark Evening News will be referred to as the Evening News.

readjustment and rehabilitation. Financial relief was given when needed, but until 1931 it was by no means a major function of the Bureau.[14] For instance, in 1928 the Bureau distributed $32,467 while handling 3,458 cases; in 1929, $31,907 for 3,651 cases; and in 1930, $39,881 for 4,734 cases.[15] The Welfare Federation, through the Community Chest, contributed $88,034 to the Social Service Bureau in 1928, $98,256.34 in 1929, and $106,656.64 in 1930.[16] Also, the Bureau had other sources of funds although up through 1930 its main source was the Community Chest. Thus, through 1930 it is obvious that most of the Bureau's expenditures went to pay case-workers, interviewers, and other employees.

The Conference of Jewish Charities consisted of eleven Jewish social welfare agencies. Of these agencies, the Jewish Social Service was the one concerned with family welfare. The Jewish Social Service derived most of its funds from the Community Chest. As was the case with the Social Service Bureau, financial aid was used only where needed in order to help individuals and families adjust themselves to society and to restore their self-reliance. During the early years of the depression it employed about twenty highly skilled and educated caseworkers (all women), who helped between 400 and 700 Jewish families a year.[17]

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[14] Welfare Federation of Newark, The Welfare Federation of Newark, 1836-1936, 83.

[15] Evening News, September 24, 1931, 15.

[16] Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments.

[17] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Four.

The Salvation Army through a welfare fund provided relief to destitute families unable to obtain aid from public agencies. It received money from both the Community Chest and from its annual business in collecting old newspapers, rags and furniture.[18] Until 1931, the case-work undertaken by the Salvation Army was minimal, probably under 200 cases in both 1929 and 1930.[19] The Salvation Army also maintained a small emergency home for transient individuals and families, and provided free meals to the indigent.[20]

The Red Cross through its Home Service Department gave assistance to veterans and their families, and also gave supplementary aid to veterans receiving public relief. Other types of cases were referred to other specialized agencies in Newark.[21] The number of veterans assisted was not substantial, probably in 1929 and 1930 less than 100 cases a year were aided.[22] The main function of the Red Cross in 1929 and 1930 was the distribution of used clothing to indigent families and individuals.

The Associated Catholic Charities was the headquarters for social service activities and the clearing house for all welfare work of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Newark. The two family welfare agencies of

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[18] Ibid., Number Two.

[19] Evening News, March 14, 1932, 6.

[20] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Two.

[21] Ibid., Number One.

[22] Evening News, January 25, 1933, 6.

the Associated Catholic Charities were the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Mt. Carmel Guild.[23] For the first months of the depression the material needs of the Catholic poor were taken care of by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a lay organization of volunteer men workers, that existed in each parish. Funds for the Society came from parish alms collections and were distributed by Society members. However, it soon became evident, in many parishes, that there were insufficient funds to support the poor. To meet the need for additional funds, the Mt. Carmel Guild was organized in Newark in March 1930.[24] Units of this organization established in all parishes were manned with volunteer women workers.[25] The activities of the Guild were financed by membership dues and donations. It would help out in a parish only when the resources of the St. Vincent de Paul Society were inadequate. From its establishment, through December 31, 1930, the Guild spent $35,087.70 for physical relief for 8,239 adults and 10,107 children. Also, 50,342 used and 3,633 new articles of clothing were donated to the Guild during that time.[26]

The Goodwill Home and Rescue Mission was a welfare agency that was concerned with giving aid to transients and/or indigents who lacked either food, shelter, clothing or medical attention. In 1930, the Mission

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[23] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Twenty-Six.

[24] Evening News, March 16, 1931, 6.

[25] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Twenty-Six.

[26] Evening News, March 16, 1931, 6.

provided approximately 32,000 free lodgings, 80,000 free meals, 21,000 loaves of bread, 1,700 articles of clothing, and medical attention for about 230 persons.[27] These figures probably represent a small increase over 1929. The Goodwill Home and Rescue Mission did not give financial aid to families, but would give food and clothing to large families whose relief income was inadequate.[28] The Mission was about 70% self-supporting (from the resale of rehabilitated old furniture, clothing, toys, etc.), and received the balance of its funds from the Community Chest.[29]

The Newark branch of the Urban League was interested mainly in alleviating the economic and social problems of the Negro in Newark. However, it did not have the resources to provide any substantial financial relief to needy Negro families. This was extremely unfortunate because many of the other private welfare agencies in Newark did not extend their facilities to Negroes (see Chapter Four). Where it could, the League referred Negroes to public and private agencies for material relief. It also ran an employment service that placed 1,200 men and women in temporary and permanent jobs in 1930.[30] Also, in 1930, the League obtained 2,433 meals and 1,033 night's lodgings for transients.[31]

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[27] Ibid., October 19, 1931, 4.

[28] Farkas and Brennan, Newark Civic and Social Agencies, Number Two.

[29] Evening News, January 16, 1933, 5.

[30] No doubt many of these placements were for domestics.

[31] Ibid., March 21, 1931, 3.

Thus, it may be observed that in 1929 and 1930 private relief agencies played an active and important role in helping Newark's poor and unemployed. However, these agencies had been active prior to the depression, for Newark as an industrial complex always had some measure of unemployment and poverty. In 1929 and 1930 the facilities of the welfare agencies were strained, but not to a point where they were inadequate to meet the emergency.

CHAPTER TWO

MUNICIPAL RELIEF IN NEWARK, 1929-1931

During the depression, the municipal agency administering relief in Newark was the Poor and Alms Department in the Department of Public Works.[1] The Poor and Alms Department was under the administrative and executive direction of the Overseer of the Poor. Until January 1931, the Overseer of the Poor had almost total control over all municipal relief policies in the City.

In 1928, there was an average of 883 families per month receiving relief from Newark's Poor and Alms Department, at a total cost for the year of $204,803. In 1929, there was an average of 1,190 families per month receiving municipal relief (a 35% increase over 1928), at a total cost for the year of $234,753 (a 14.6% increase over 1928). Thus, although many more families were on relief in 1929 (4,977) than in 1928 (3,150)[2] the average family receiving relief in 1929 generally either needed less relief per month, or needed relief for a shorter period of time, than the average family on relief in 1928. Since the social workers on the Overseer's staff did very little casework (see below), and since relief in 1929 cost the City only $30,000 more than in 1928, it cannot be said that the Poor and Alms Department faced emergency conditions during 1929.

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[1] During the depression (and until 1953) Newark was under the Commission form of government. There were five elected Commissioners, each having under his jurisdiction one of five departments of city government. The Department of Public Works was one of these departments.

[2] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets, n.d., unpaged.

By late 1930 the unemployment situation in Newark was acute. In the last six months of that year industrial employment decreased approximately 25%.[3] Almost twice as many families were on public relief in the last six months of 1930 than in the first six months of the year.[4] To try and counter the unemployment problem Mayor Congleton and the other four City Commissioners instituted a program of finding municipal work for family heads, in the hope that employment conditions would soon improve. However, until December this program involved probably no more than several hundred men, who installed water mains, painted water hydrants, and performed other like work.[5]

On December 2, it was announced that between 2,500 and 3,000 Newark men would be given employment at $4 per day excavating the Morris Canal bed for the construction of the Newark City Railway. The cost of the work would be $112,500 more than if it was an advertised job going to the lowest bidder, but this was to be offset by giving the unemployed work. Picks and shovels were to be used. This, of course, was more expensive than steam shovels, but, as the Mayor pointed out, if the men did not find other jobs, the City would have to care for them anyway. It was hoped that by using picks and shovels, the work would last through February and possibly through March.[6]

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[3] New Jersey Department of Labor, The Industrial Bulletin, Vols., IV, V (August 1930 - January 1931).

[4] Evening News, October 27, 1931, 5.

[5] Ibid., November 29, 1930, 1.

[6] Ibid., December 2, 1930, 1.

The total wages for the subway workers were estimated at $187,000. First preference was to married men with families, and men who supported mothers and sisters. All applicants were to be bona fide Newark residents. Commissioner Egan hoped that the many apple venders in Newark would be taken off the City's streets and put to work on the railway.[7]

Within three days over 5,000 men had come to City Hall to apply for jobs on the railway.[8] With such a great demand for jobs the Mayor decided to use additional hand labor on the railway, and announced that jobs were in sight for between 3,000 and 4,000 men.[9] In the first ten days of registration there were 9,500 applicants. A check of the first 1,000 names saw 400 stricken as non-residents of Newark.[10]

By December 13, 700 men were working on the railway, with 400 being added within two days.[11] On December 16, 1,615 men were engaged in pick and shovel work for the railway.[12] By January 3, 1931, this number had risen to 2,245.[13]

In February, heavy snowfalls caused temporary suspensions of work on the City Railway for the approximately 3,000 workers. However,

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., December 5, 1930, 2.

[9] Ibid., December 6, 1930, 1.

[10] Ibid., December 11, 1930, 1.

[11] Ibid., December 13, 1930, 4.

[12] Ibid., December 16, 1930, 2.

[13] Ibid., January 3, 1931, 3.

during one heavy snowfall, between 1,200 and 1,300 men were given one to two days of work shoveling snow at a cost of $10,000 to the City.[14] During the first ten days of March, all men working on picks and shovels for the railway were laid off since the work was completed.[15]

The City Railway job took three months, and close to 5,000 men were employed on it, although probably no more than 3,000 men worked on it together at the same time. This was because some men worked only a few days a week, and others more, but, in any event, the work was not steady for any of the men who got the jobs.[16] This was, of course, because the City wanted as many men as possible to work and receive the wages. The City Railway job was one of the first work-relief projects undertaken in the State, and was a precursor of the work-relief program of the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration (see Chapter Five).

The final relief statistics for 1930 reveal that a total of 7,500 families with 37,500 persons in them were aided by the Overseer. This represented a 50% increase over the total number of families aided in 1929, and a 170% increase over the total number of persons aided in that year. The total cost of relief in Newark during the year was $493,784, a 110% increase over 1929.[17] The original municipal appropriation for relief had been $225,000 for 1930, but conditions forced extra appropriations

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[14] Ibid., February 9, 1931, 1.

[15] Ibid., February 28, 1931, 1.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

as well as a $200,000 bond issue.[18] The staff of the Overseer of the Poor was expanded during the year. However, as will be seen, the amount of casework done by this staff was not increased. The unemployment situation was worsening, tax receipts were diminishing, but the City still was able to find funds to support its relief program.

On December 27, 1930, the Newark Evening News began a series of articles exposing chaotic and corrupt conditions in the Newark Poor and Alms Department. Some of the most spectacular examples of corruption involved the Overseer of the Poor, Frank La Fera. For example, La Fera had a dozen or more men working for him as construction workers in a privately owned company. However, these workers instead of being paid regular wages were receiving money from the Overseer's office as relief cases. The men also got vouchers from the Overseer which entitled them and their families to numerous pairs of shoes at the City's expense.[19]

The revelations in the articles made it necessary for the Director of Public Works to request, on January 3, 1931, the New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies to make an investigation of the Newark Poor and Alms Department. This investigation took place from January 5

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[18] Evening News, December 12, 1930, 1.

[19] Ibid., December 29, 1930, 1.

through January 23. The results were submitted on January 28.[20] They are worthy of close examination mainly because of the full picture they give of public relief operations in Newark.

The Poor and Alms Department was under the direction of the Overseer of the Poor, Frank La Fera. La Fera had been appointed Overseer in August 1925, and his previous experience had been as a shoe salesman. The assigned personnel in the Overseer's Office included six clerks and nineteen caseworkers (twelve of these under civil service and seven were temporary appointments). In addition to these, the Overseer had the assistance of about thirty-five employees from other bureaus of the Department of Public Works including health inspectors and bathhouse attendants. A majority of the thirty-five worked at clerical tasks with many, however, working as interviewers for relief applicants. It is no wonder that the study found that "the methods of interviewing clients indicate that the workers assigned to this task are not competent to handle this kind of work."[21]

The investigation indicated that there were no objective criteria used by the Overseer on which to judge the merits of relief applications.

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[20] New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, Report of Survey of Poor and Alms Department of the City of Newark, New Jersey, Part One (January 28, 1931 - unpublished), 1. This study is not publicly available in Newark. The Overseer's office claimed it was not sure it had received the study in 1931. The Newark Public Library, which has a special division devoted to New Jersey and Newark documents, had never received a copy, although they probably had requested one when it became available. The nearest copy of the study is in Trenton, over eighty miles from Newark.

[21] Ibid., 3.

However, relief applicants found that it was no handicap to be referred to the Overseer's Office by a politician with City Hall connections. Thus, the study reported that "in the course of our investigation (we found) many cases in which genuine distress deserving of relief were ignored."[22]

Where relief was allowed, inadequate supervision of caseworkers, or incompetent caseworkers, resulted in an absence of family rehabilitation work by the Overseer's office. The investigation asserted that although the case load was very high, Newark had enough caseworkers to perform a substantial amount of family rehabilitation work. The Overseer's work stopped with material relief, and the opportunity afforded his office for constructive family casework was ignored.[23]

The study made an analysis of the type of relief given to 4,713 families during December 1930. It was found that about 80% of these families received grocery orders, 44% received milk orders, and 90.5% received coal orders.[24] Of the weekly grocery orders received by 2,180 families during December 1930, 22% of the families received $2 and $3 orders, 70% received $4 and $5 orders, and the other 8% received $6 and $7 orders.[25] The average weekly grocery order received by a Newark family was $4.32, and the amount per individual was ninety-one cents.

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[22] Ibid., 28.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., Part II, 15.

[25] Ibid., 17.

It was found that the average grocery order given to one person living alone was $3.09 per week, while each member of a family of ten received only fifty-two cents worth of groceries per week.[26] A graph shows that in almost all cases as the family got larger, the amount of grocery order value got less per individual.[27]

The family status and ages of the heads of 1,216 families receiving relief during December 1930 were also analyzed by the study. Almost 78% of the family heads were married, 1.6% were single men, and 20.5% were women. Of the 20.5% women, 12.2% were widows, and 7.2% had been deserted by their husbands.[28] Sixty-six per cent of the family heads were under forty-five years of age (69% of the women and 58% of the men). Also, 6.5% of the women and 14.5% of the men were over sixty years of age.[29]

One of the most interesting analyses presented in the study concerned the length of residence in Newark of 1,157 heads of families receiving relief in December 1930. What makes this analysis so interesting is that it disproves one of the most often repeated criticisms of relief in Newark during the depression, that is, that a large percentage of those who received public relief were transients who had never established residency in Newark. Of the 1,157 cases examined, 44.8%

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[26] Ibid., 19.

[27] Ibid., 20.

[28] Ibid., 24.

[29] Ibid., 25.

had lived in Newark twenty years and over, 26% for between ten and twenty years, 21.4% for between five and ten years, 7.2% between one and four years, and only 0.6% had been living in Newark for less than one year.[30] Thus approximately only 7.8% of those receiving relief in Newark had been residents there for less than five years.

Because of an increasing amount of evictions in 1930, Newark began to pay rent for those relief clients that required it. The rental policy of the Poor and Alms Department was to pay rent not in excess of $25 per month, but not to pay for accrued rentals. Because of the increase in rent payments in late 1930 (in November 1930 rent payments exceeded $4,000), the Overseer of the Poor was instructed by the City Commission to require clients to show a dispossess notice from the District Court before the City would pay their rent. It was felt by many that previously many clients lied to the City (often with corroboration by the landlords) when they claimed they would be evicted unless the City paid their rent. Thus, it was hoped that by requiring the landlord to make at least one trip to court to get a dispossess notice and warrant of removal (which incidentally cost the landlord $4.70), the number of persons applying for rent relief would decrease.[31]

For the six year period from 1925 through 1930, the percentage

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[30] Ibid., 31. Supposedly five years of legal residence in Newark was required for municipal relief. Those who had not been in Newark that long were given temporary help, and were asked to return to their previous homes. See Evening News, July 23, 1932, 11.

[31] Ibid., Part I, 21.

allotment for groceries remained stable at between 40% and 50% of all relief expenditures. The percentage for cash relief and clothing relief likewise remained constant (probably less than 5%). Salaries for the Poor and Alms Department were from 14% to 16% of total relief expenditures for the six-year period. Rent payments only became part of relief expenditures in 1930, because prior to then the City would not pay rent for the indigent. However, the one item that rose every year from 1925 (4.2% of all expenditures) to 1930 (20% of all expenditures) was coal relief.[32]

As of December 1930, 90.5% of all persons receiving material relief from the Overseer were also receiving relief in the form of coal. Newark families constituting approximately 3% of the entire City population got coal relief in November 1930.[33] The brother of the Overseer of the Poor owned the Clark Coal Company, which had the exclusive contract with Newark to supply coal relief. This exclusive contract was justified by officials on the grounds that where one company provides all the coal for the indigent, the City would benefit from the lowest possible price. However, such was not the case, since prices charged Newark by the Clark Coal Company were no lower than prices charged by any other coal company.[34]

To make the family venture even more binding, the sister of the

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[32] Ibid., 17.

[33] Ibid., Part II, 23.

[34] Ibid., Part I, 18.

Overseer of the Poor (and, of course, the sister of the owner of the Clark Coal Company) worked in the Overseer's office supposedly as a caseworker. However, this was not her function. Rather, she was in charge of handling all the coal slips in the office, and was the only person allowed to process these slips. The study reported that "There has been a noteworthy liberality on the part of the Overseer in certifying clients for relief in the form of City coal."[35]

There were eight major recommendations made by the State Department of Institutions and Agencies in its report on Newark's Poor and Alms Department. These were:

(1) Replacement of the Overseer of the Poor;

(2) Reorganization of the Poor and Alms Department by creating a Department of Public Welfare with a professionally trained, experienced executive in charge;

(3) A group of five to seven outstanding citizens with an interest in welfare activities to have general direction over the policies of the Department of Public Welfare;

(4) End of patronage appointments;

(5) Establishment of definite policies for applications for relief, and for the types and amounts of welfare to be given;

(6) Cancellation of contract with Clark Coal Company. Coal

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[35] Ibid.

orders to be properly checked as to necessary quality and quantity. Recipients of coal relief to purchase coal from any responsible dealer in City;

(7) Grocery and milk orders should be properly checked as to necessity, and purchases of groceries should be itemized in such a manner to provide effective checks on use of funds, and

(8) Rental policies should be reviewed and new policies established to safeguard taxpayers and needy.[36]

Almost immediately after the release of the study, the City Commission agreed to follow its recommendation for the appointment of a Bureau of Public Welfare. Such a Bureau, they claimed, would keep politics out of welfare work and bring about closer cooperation between the Poor and Alms Department and other social service agencies in the City.[37] Also, despite loud protestations of innocence, Frank La Fera was replaced as Overseer of the Poor.[38] La Fera went so far as to file suit in court to gain reinstatement, but he soon dropped the suit. La Fera's replacement was Owen Malady, who had previous experience in the Probation and Poor and Alms Departments.

Malady began his work as Overseer of the Poor on February 16, 1931. He took office with the promise that he would follow the recommendations

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[36] Ibid., 31.

[37] Evening News, February 2, 1931, 2.

[38] Ibid., February 4, 1931, 1.

Of the Report on the Poor and Alms Department.[39] Within three days he had fulfilled several of the recommendations. Firstly, he announced that when the contract with Clark Coal Company would expire on March 1, recipients of coal relief could get coal from whatever dealer they chose. Secondly, milk orders which previously could only be filled by two dealers in the City could now be filled by any dealer. Thirdly, careful investigation of each family receiving food orders would be made. Finally, the sister of Frank La Fera was to spend all her time as a caseworker.[40]

In early March 1931, Malady held his first meeting with the staff of the Poor and Alms Department. He suggested that members of the Department read books dealing with social service, and know the provisions of the State and City poor laws.[41] Two weeks later the Overseer announced that Mary Phelps Wheeler, nationally known welfare worker, had accepted a six month contract (at $15 per day) to help train personnel in the Poor and Alms Department. She was to specialize in casework and new methods of relief work.[42]

By March 15, 1931, the City had already disbursed $327,893 for relief, which was $27,893 above the entire relief appropriation for

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[39] Ibid., February 16, 1931, 1.

[40] Ibid., February 19, 1931, 1.

[41] Ibid., March 9, 1931, 6.

[42] Ibid., March 23, 1931, 5.

that year.[43] By the end of the month, $376,605 had been spent by the Poor and Alms Department. During March, 6,367 families were receiving relief. Malady had removed 685 families from the relief rolls since he had taken over on February 16, but he had to add 1,149 families to the rolls because of the discontinuance of the City Railway work and because of other new applications. Malady listed seven ideas that he was following in the work of his Department:

(1) More careful scrutiny of relief applications;

(2) Applicants required to utilize family (relatives) resources wherever possible;

(3) Attempt (unsuccessful) to find jobs for relief applicants;

(4) More rent money needed because of depletion of family resources;

(5) Termination of relief more promptly once need passes;

(6) Installation of modern (mechanical) record keeping equipment, and

(7) Amount of money spent not as important as making sure no money is wasted.[44]

By April 28, 1931, another one of the Report's recommendations was adopted. Starting on this date all grocery orders carried on their reverse side the kinds of goods that could be purchased by the order. The grocer would check off the kind and amount of material furnished

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[43] Ibid., March 24, 1931, 6.

[44] Ibid., March 30, 1931, 2.

and certify, by signature, that the material had been delivered. Orders were not to be transferable.[45]

During April, under Malady's direction, ten policemen made an investigation of 6,200 relief cases as of April 1. Because of this investigation, 946 active cases were removed from the relief rolls for the following reasons: (1) people employed or with ample resources, 554; (2) reported active but dead, 21; (3) moved out of town, 11; (4) unknown at address given, 274, and (5) not located because of improper address or where address found to be vacant houses, garages, etc., 86. Many of the cases stricken from the rolls were persons who had been registered by county committeemen (district leaders), and had been accepted by the Overseer without investigation. It was stressed by Malady that all such cases originated during the tenure of Frank La Fera.[46]

In July 1931, Director of Public Safety Egan said a municipal lodging house would be needed if the depression continued because of the growing number of transients and homeless in the City. Such persons were currently being lodged in police stations, but Egan said this interfered with the work of the police department.[47] In September,

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[45] Ibid., April 28, 1931, 21. See Chapter Eight, for abuses of food orders attending this new policy.

[46] Ibid., April 30, 1931, 1.

[47] Ibid., July 31, 1931, 5.

showers were installed in an old school, and 1,000 cots (for men only) were set up to accommodate the homeless.[48] The lodging house was to be opened December 1, but because of the cold it opened its doors on the night of November 27 to over 400 men.[49] Prior to this date police stations had sheltered 32,000 men during 1931.[50]

During December 1931, milk distribution cost the City $7,926. This amount was almost twice the cost of milk during any other month of 1931. The increased milk distribution was occasioned by pleas of visiting teachers, school nurses, probation officers, and others who claimed that malnutrition was being found in an increasing number of children. The experience of the Newark Poor and Alms Department indicated that many children were beginning to feel the effects of the two years of economic depression.[51]

The financial situation was rapidly deteriorating in Newark during 1931. By October almost $950,000 of temporary loan bonds had been issued for the Poor and Alms Department, in addition to the $300,000 originally appropriated in the City budget to the Department. However, under New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration legislation (passed in October 1931) Newark was able to spread these bond issues over eight

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[48] Ibid., September 26, 1931, 4.

[49] Ibid., November 28, 1931, 3. For further information on the municipal lodging house, see Chapter Seven.

[50] Ibid., January 7, 1932, 12.

[51] Ibid., January 14, 1932, 6.

years.[52] By the end of 1931, Newark had spent $1,639,073 for relief (a 230% increase over the 1930 total expenditure of $493,784).[53] Financial conditions were so bad that in December the City was forced to issue $6,000,000 in tax anticipation bonds. These bonds were issued to save the City from defaulting on unpaid county taxes.[54]

Under the work-relief program of the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration (see Chapter Five), over 2,000 of Newark's unemployed began work in December 1931. Because of this, 557 cases were discontinued on the relief rolls.[55] However, there was still a large increase in the number of cases on the relief rolls from November (6,078) to December (7,180).[56] Over 25,000 persons were registered in Newark as unemployed by December 31, 1931.[57] Thus, Newark's relief load was bound to increase during 1932, unless either conditions improved, or the work-relief program of the N.J.E.R.A. was enormously expanded.

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[52] Ibid., December 2, 1931, 2.

[53] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[54] Evening News, January 6, 1932, 1.

[55] Ibid., December 14, 1931, 5.

[56] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[57] Evening News, February 15, 1932, 6.

CHAPTER THREE

SEMI-OFFICIAL RELIEF AGENCIES IN NEWARK, 1930-1931

The autumn and winter of 1930-1931 was the first period of time during the depression that a substantial number of families in Newark was forced to ask for municipal relief. In October 1930, there were 2,248 families receiving aid from the Overseer of the Poor, and this number more than doubled in November to 4,916. By February 1931, 5,903 families representing 29,515 persons were receiving municipal relief.[1]

An unemployment relief canvass in the latter part of November 1930, revealed that there were 9,000 men out of work, not including many with only part-time employment. The canvass uncovered many cases of extreme distress. Municipal aid alone was apparently insufficient to alleviate the widespread effects of the depression. Also, help was not forthcoming from quarters which should have been more sympathetic. When the canvass revealed that electricity and gas were being shut off in a rapidly increasing number of homes, Director Murray of the Department of Public Works suggested that Public Service Electric and Gas take one-half payment from the Overseer, and write the other half off. Public Service, in discarding the suggestion, said the idea was "novel".[2]

As the number of persons on relief increased, expenditures in the

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[1] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[2] Evening News, November 25, 1930, 2.

Overseer's Office skyrocketed proportionately. The number of case-workers in the Office was insufficient to service the many families on the relief rolls. To meet these problems, Director Murray with the backing of the other four City Commissioners organized the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee on November 24, 1930. The Committee was to be a semi-official body with a twelve-man executive board composed of civic leaders, including Murray.[3] The Committee's main purpose was to supplement municipal relief and normal charity work.[4] It was also assigned the task of supervising clothing distribution in the City, and was given the right to sanction or disapprove of plans for the holding of unemployment relief benefits (concerts, boxing matches, etc.).[5] Funds for the Committee were originally to be raised from voluntary contributions of one day's pay for each of four successive months by municipal employees, and from benefits.[6]

Most City employee groups agreed to allow deductions to be made from their pay checks for unemployment relief. However, a less expensive plan than the one originally devised by the Committee was the one

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[3] Ibid.

[4] New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration, Unemployment and Relief Conditions in New Jersey (January 1932), 20.

[5] From 1929 through 1931, many benefits were held to aid the unemployed. After 1931, the number of such benefits decreased as the funds derived from them proved to be less and less significant when measured with the millions of dollars needed for unemployment relief.

[6] Evening News, November 25, 1930, 2.

actually used to obtain funds. The new plan was first put into effect by the Newark Patrolmen's Benevolent Association and the Firemen's Mutual Benevolent Association of Newark. Both voted to have each member donate 2% of each of five consecutive paychecks to the Committee.[7] This plan would bring the Committee approximately $25,000 from just these two groups.[8] Other municipal employee groups later adopted this plan.

The 3,700 Newark school system employees had been carrying out considerable relief work in public schools for many months. They had subscribed $70,000 to the latest Community Chest drive, and were generally known as the most charitable of all employee groups in the City. The teachers were directly concerned with the welfare of their students, and their main concern as far as relief went was to aid these students. Therefore, they did not wish to participate in the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee, which was interested in general relief aid. Also, they were against the paycheck deduction plan of the Committee, favoring instead, voluntary individual contributions. In order to unify their own relief efforts, and to counter the relief plan of the Citizen's Committee, the Newark Teachers' Association, supported by the Newark Board of Education, organized the Central Relief Committee on November 27, 1930.[9] A few days later, this Committee stated that an emergency fund of $20,000 was needed for

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[7] Ibid., December 3, 1930, 5.

[8] Ibid., December 4, 1930, 2.

[9] Ibid., November 28, 1930, 21.

work within the schools. Money was to be raised by voluntary contributions from teachers and other school system employees. The money was to be used to alleviate distress among public school pupils in the City.[10] General family welfare problems and need for large amounts of aid were to be turned over to welfare specialists.[11] Each school was directed to appoint a three-man relief committee of its own to supervise relief expenditures within the school.[12]

Civic groups quickly joined their efforts with the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee. The Federated Club Women of Newark representing twenty-three womens' clubs met December 1, and organized the Club Women's Emergency Relief Committee to cooperate with the Citizen's Committee. To acquire funds, the Club Women's Committee planned to collect clothing and money at donation parties. The Children's Emergency Relief Committee, which concerned itself solely with providing shoes to indigent children, also announced their cooperation with the Citizen's Committee. This group was composed of representatives of public, private, and governmental units connected with children.[13]

The Citizen's Committee designated the Newark Red Cross as the

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[10] Ibid., December 2, 1930, 6.

[11] Ibid., December 9, 1930, 2.

[12] Ibid., December 2, 1930, 6.

[13] Ibid.

official agency thru which citizens would send donations of clothing.[14] The Red Cross opened its clothing distribution center on December 21, 1930, and within one month, they had distributed 1,084 garments to 132 families. Officials pointed out that there was a very great need for children's clothing since many children, lacking winter garments, were unable to attend school.[15] To be eligible to receive clothing from the Red Cross, an applicant had to have a requisition either from the Overseer of the Poor, the Urban League, the Social Service Bureau, or one of a few other organizations. On March 3, 1931, the Citizen's Committee announced the closing of the distribution center on March 6 since they felt that the worst of the winter was over, and the main demands had been met. During its ten weeks of operation the center distributed 8,000 garments to 1,601 cases, which reached approximately 4,000 persons.[16]

Practical relief was started by the Citizen's Committee on December 16, 1930, when its executive committee authorized $1,000 to be distributed among the eight relief stations set up by the organization. Of these stations, four were operated by the Social Service Bureau, and one each by the Associated Catholic Charities, the Jewish Social Service, the Salvation Army, and the Children's Aid Society.[17] Prior to this

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[14] Ibid., December 11, 1930, 2.

[15] Ibid., January 22, 1931, 9.

[16] Ibid., March 3, 1931, 6.

[17] Ibid., December 17, 1930, 6.

distribution, the Citizen's Committee had notified all churches, fraternal organizations, and civic groups in the City to register relief cases that they were aiding with the Social Service Exchange to prevent duplication and fraud.[18] Of course, this was already being done by most of the social organizations in Newark.

On January 6, 1931, the Citizen's Committee announced that its total receipts so far were $7,076.70, an amount that fell far short of expectations. It had been estimated that contributions from municipal employees alone would be $18,000 per month (only $2,399.15 of the $7,076.70 was from such employees).[19] In comparison to the small amount collected at this point by the Citizen's Committee, the Central Relief Committee of the Newark Teachers' Association had already collected $17,345.[20] The Central Relief Committee spent $5,400 of this amount for relief during December.[21]

Receipts for the Citizen's Committee during January 1931 were $14,956.27, $9,180 of this from municipal employees. With an additional $7,000 coming the first few days of February, and with the promise of further substantial aid during that month, the Committee appropriated $15,000 for relief work during February.[22] During

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[18] Ibid., December 11, 1930, 2.

[19] Ibid., January 6, 1931, 7.

[20] Ibid., January 8, 1931, 14.

[21] Ibid., May 6, 1931, 17.

[22] Ibid., February 3, 1931, 2.

January 1931, the Committee had appropriated approximately $10,000. The Central Relief Committee spent $3,465 in January and $2,920 in February.[23] Thus, over $31,000 was spent for relief by both the Citizen's and Central Relief Committees in a two-month period. To continue to collect such large sums of money in subsequent months would prove increasingly difficult for the two committees.

Municipal employees in Newark were paid twice a month during the depression, on the first and the fifteenth. In the case of most municipal employees who permitted 2% of five consecutive paychecks to be withheld, such deductions began either January 1 or January 15, 1931. Thus, by the end of March the Citizen's Committee was faced by the prospect of either curtailing its financial aid to the unemployed or making an additional appeal for funds. Disbursements by the Committee were averaging $4,200 a week, and it was felt by officials of the Committee that this weekly amount would be needed until July 1, when it was thought the emergency would be over.[24]

By February 1931, the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee was supplying the Social Service Bureau almost $10,000 per month above the Bureau's appropriation from the Community Chest. The Executive Secretary of the Bureau, Edward Parker, in a speech before that organization stated that a new phase of the unemployment problem had developed as shown in the character of applicants for relief. Many

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[23] Ibid., May 6, 1931, 17.

[24] Ibid., April 2, 1931, 14.

persons asking for relief had savings and other resources when they lost their jobs, but now had reached an end of these resources. Parker also reported that social workers had discovered an increase in the number of cases of rickets among undernourished children and a larger number of desertion and non-support cases.[25] Two months later, in April, the General Chairman of the Citizen's Committee, J. Henry Bacheller, repeated that the Committee considered July 1 as the date when their job would be over. However, then as if to contradict his optimistic prediction, he said: "There is an increasing amount of unemployment distress in Newark. This is because more so-called white collar families are reaching the end of their rope . . . Many who have been out of work a long time are becoming more and more dependent. We are finding that evictions for non-payment of rent increase, despite the approach of better times."[26] It is difficult to discover what prevailing conditions led Chairman Bacheller to foresee the "approach of better times."

On April 2, 1931, the Citizen's Committee made an appeal to large institutions whose employees were working full-time and to individuals to contribute a percentage of their salary to the Committee.[27]

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[25] Ibid., February 20, 1931, 4 (Sec. 2).

[26] Ibid., April 15, 1931, 1.

[27] Ibid., April 2, 1931, 14.

A letter was sent out on April 10 to banks, insurance companies, department stores, and utilities making the appeal.[28] The letter stressed that no money collected was spent on expenses as all help for the Citizen's Committee was on a voluntary basis.[29] It also stressed the difference between the Community Chest (not the specific product of a business depression) and the Committee's fund.[30]

The appeal to large business concerns was both a fair and necessary action by the Citizen's Committee. As of April 4, 1931, out of $59,763.52 collected by the Committee, about ninety per cent had come from municipal employees.[31] Since there were approximately 6,000 such employees (excluding those in the Board of Education), the average contribution was close to nine dollars per employee. Also, 3,700 Board of Education employees including 2,600 teachers had contributed $24,062.85 for the September 1930 - June 1931 school year, by the beginning of May 1931.[32] Since most of the $24,062.85 came from teachers (rather than from the custodial, clerical, cafeteria, and other staffs of the Board of Education who were paid less than the teachers), it can be estimated that the average teacher's contribution was also nine dollars.

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[28] Ibid., April 10, 1931, 6.

[29] Ibid., April 2, 1931, 14.

[30] Ibid., April 11, 1931, 1.

[31] Ibid., April 2, 1931, 14; April 11, 1931, 1.

[32] Ibid., May 6, 1931, 17. The Central Relief Committee had collected $18,862.85 of the $24,062.85, while the difference had been collected by teachers before the creation of the Committee.

There was no reason why municipal employees (including those under the Board of Education) had any more responsibility to provide funds for the unemployed than employees and/or employers in private enterprise. The necessity for the appeal to large business concerns was unquestioned. As was mentioned previously, most contributions to the Citizen's Committee by municipal employees had already been made prior to April 1. Also, the demands on the Committee were increasing rather than decreasing despite earlier optimism by various officials.

The response of department store, banking and utility concerns to the appeal for funds by the Citizen's Committee was favorable. From the time the appeal was made in early April to the end of May the Committee's fund received over $30,000, most of this from such concerns. These contributions made it possible for the Committee to continue its work to July 1.[33] However, it was decided to carry on work beyond the original July 1 date, and to this end, the Committee decided to make an appeal to factory workers. Letters went to eight of the largest factories asking workers to contribute two per cent of their wages for three months, from July 1 to October 1.[34] This appeal was apparently successful since the Committee collected well over $100,000 in the last six months of 1931.

Each succeeding month in 1931 saw the demands on Newark's charitable agencies increase. The weekly amount distributed by the Citizen's

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[33] Ibid., May 23, 1931, 5.

[34] Ibid., June 15, 1931, 2.

Committee to five social service agencies was $4,200 in April, $4,300 in July, and $5,300 by November.[35] However, receipts of the Committee which increased after midyear because of the appeals to business and industrial concerns began to fall off towards the end of the year when the three-month contribution plans ended. Also, business conditions were worsening as unemployment increased and wages decreased. Thus, the Committee faced the problem as to whether it should make further appeals for contributions or disband.

In early November, the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee announced its intention to disband in the latter part of December when its funds would be exhausted.[36] No further appeal for funds was made after this announcement. There were two stated reasons for this decision. The first was the Committee's interest in the Community Chest. It was feared that many people would delay contributions to the Community Chest drive in order to contribute to the Citizen's Committee in 1932. All agencies receiving funds from the Citizen's Committee were affiliated with the Community Chest Drive except the Associated Catholic Charities. The Community Chest collected $1,242,303 in 1931, about $530,000 of this going to the agencies which received funds from the Committee.[37] The Citizen's Committee collected less than half the latter figure in 1931. Thus, it was imperative that the Community Chest

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[35] Ibid., July 10, 1931, 8; November 5, 1931, 2.

[36] Ibid., November 5, 1931, 2.

[37] Welfare Federation of Newark, Certified Audit Reports; Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments.

drive be conducted under the best conditions, without the existence of a "coupetitor". The second reason for the disbanding of the Committee was the establishment of the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration (see Chapter Five), which it was hoped would alleviate unemployment conditions in Newark.[38]

It must again be stressed that the Citizen's Committee was formed in late 1930 to meet an emergency, and not as a permanent organization. The emergency, it was predicted, would be over by July 1, 1931, and then the Committee would be disbanded. When it became apparent that the emergency for which the Committee was created to meet was not of a temporary nature, the Committee responded by extending its work into the autumn of 1931. By this time almost every category of employed workers in the City had been appealed to for funds. Because of the semi-official character of the Committee, the excellent publicity it got, plus its hard-working and influential leadership, the appeals were successful. People in general will respond generously to an emergency appeal. However, if an emergency cause takes on the features of permanency as the depression did, subsequent appeals for funds by a group such as the Committee could not help but be much less successful than the initial appeals. Also, since the number of unemployed was rising and the amount of money possessed by Newarkers decreased, all fund raising organizations found themselves in difficulties. Thus,

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[38] Evening News, November 5, 1931, 2.

along with the stated reasons by the Committee for its disbandment, it may be suggested that the Committee lacked confidence in its ability to continue to collect enough funds to justify its existence.

According to State sources, the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee, in its twelve-month existence (December 1930 to December 1931), distributed approximately $250,000 to social service agencies for Newark's unemployed.[39] Although this figure seems a bit high, no other source was discovered which gave a final amount for the Committee.[40] As previously stated, the Central Relief Committee of the Newark Teachers' Association distributed about $25,000 during the 1930-1931 school year.[41] From late November 1930 to December 1931, the number of unemployed increased from 9,000 to 23,675, or 163%.[42] During that same period the number of families receiving aid from the Overseer increased from 5,484 to 7,180, or 30%, and the monthly relief expenditures of the Overseer rose from about $67,000 to $154,367.85, or 128%.[43] Thus, it is obvious that the great increase in unemployment during 1931 was not fully reflected in either the number of families on public relief or in public relief expenditures. This may partly be explained by the

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[39] New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration, Unemployment and Relief Conditions in New Jersey, 20.

[40] Using the monthly averages cited in the Evening News, a total of about $235,000 is indicated (see footnote 35).

[41] See footnote 32.

[42] Evening News, November 25, 1930, 2; December 2, 1931, 8.

[43] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

fact that many of those who lost their jobs during 1931 had some savings which were not yet exhausted. However, it can be unequivically stated that many persons who found themselves in need during 1931 were not forced to go on public relief because of the availability of aid from groups receiving funds from the Citizen's Committee. In further illustrating the importance of the Committee's aid, it may be observed that during 1931 the Overseer distributed aid on the average of $28,862 per week to the unemployed.[44] Weekly aid from the Committee during 1931 (if we accept the $250,000 figure) averaged $4,808. Thus, during 1931, the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee gave $1.00 for every $6.00 in relief provided by the Overseer.

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[44] Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRIVATE RELIEF AGENCIES IN NEWARK, 1931-1933

From October 1930 to January 1931, industrial employment in Newark decreased approximately 10.7%, total wages decreased 17.1%, and average weekly earnings decreased 6.7%.[1] Public relief cases increased from 2,248 in October 1930 to 5,352 in January 1931.[2] These conditions were reflected in the 1931 Community Chest campaign held during October and November of 1930, when $1,242,303 was collected.[3] A campaign deficit of $187,086 almost forced the Welfare Federation to cut agency budgets by this amount.[4] However, this was avoided when a $138,000 bank loan was taken out on December 10, 1930,[5] and when subsequent contributions came in during 1931.

The 1932 Community Chest campaign (October - November 1931) was more successful than the one in 1931, for over $1,285,203 was collected.[6] However, the seven family agencies of the Newark Welfare Federation handling material relief spent only $226,300 for relief in 1932, as compared to $259,000 in 1931.[7] Presumably the decrease between

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[1] New Jersey Department of Labor, The Industrial Bulletin, Vols. IV, V (November 1930 - February 1931).

[2] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[3] Welfare Federation of Newark, Certified Audit Reports.

[4] Evening News, November 25, 1930, 10.

[5] Welfare Federation of Newark, Annual Report, 1931, 19.

[6] Welfare Federation of Newark, Certified Audit Reports.

[7] Evening News, April 13, 1933, 19.

1931 and 1932 can be attributed to the thousands of dollars distributed to these agencies in 1931 by the Citizen's Relief Committee. The 1933 campaign during which $1,331,808 was raised was the last successful one run by the Community Chest during the depression, for collections decreased from 1934 through 1939.[8]

In the first two months of 1931, the Social Service Bureau distributed $28,438 in relief funds to over 2,000 families representing about 10,000 persons.[9] This may be compared to the $39,881 distributed during all of 1930. By the time 1931 ended the Bureau had given $178,000 to approximately 35,000 individuals in 6,000 families. More than one-half of these families were handicapped by unemployment, and more than one-fourth of them had debts.[10] It was estimated that over 3,300 persons were totally dependent on the Bureau for food, housing, clothing and heat.[11] The monthly appropriation from the Community Chest to the Bureau in 1931 was less than $9,000, and about one-half of this amount went for salaries for caseworkers and clerical aids.[12] The bulk of the money distributed by the Social Service Bureau in 1931, came from the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee, which had been organized

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[8] Welfare Federation of Newark, Certified Audit Reports.

[9] Evening News, February 20, 1931, 4 (Sec. 2); March 27, 1931, 7 (Sec. 2).

[10] Ibid., April 6, 1932, 4.

[11] The Newark Sunday Call, October 25, 1931, 12.

[12] Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments.

in November 1930. This Committee appropriated $127,000 to the Bureau during 1931.[13] It was this extra $10,000 per month that enabled the Bureau to distribute in 1931 over 350% more than it did in 1930.

With so many families under its care, the Social Service Bureau could not give adequate casework to the families needing it. During 1931, there were only about twenty caseworkers to take care of the 6,000 families that received aid from the Bureau. Clearly, the work of the Bureau should not have been to distribute relief, for this was the City's responsibility. Commenting on this problem, Edward Parker, Executive Secretary of the Bureau, said:

> The special purpose and particular function of the private agency is the social and industrial readjustment and rehabilitation of individuals and families. For this reason the City Welfare Department should bear the heaviest part if not all of the burden of relief of emergency distress. It should also handle all support and relief cases due to long term or chronic sickness, excepting when complicated family maladjustments and personality disorders are conspicuous.
>
> The City department, too, should take care of cases of repeated desertions or chronic dependency cases and all or most employment relief not involving personality complications.
>
> The work of the private family agency would be more efficacious if it were confined to the handling of relief cases in which there are complicated family and personal troubles, in which readjustments are possible; short term relief cases, where only economic complications exist, or cases where families are making first applications for temporary relief, high grade families which have not acquired residence, cases involving community experimentation

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[13] Evening News, April 6, 1932, 4.

> and cases of mental or social control where marital infelicity requires extensive personal aid and advice rather than financial relief.[14]

The problem, of course, was that the City had insufficient funds to take care of all the emergency distress cases. Thus, private relief agencies were forced to devote much of their efforts to such cases, therefore, partially ignoring the service they were best equipped to handle, casework rehabilitation.

During March 1931, the Social Service Bureau sent out five caseworkers to see what happened when respectable people became jobless. These caseworkers went to fifty families that were being helped by the Bureau. The findings were indeed sobering. Many families lived on bread, potatoes, coffee, and weak soup. In twenty-six of the families, one person was employed, but only for two or three days a week. Most families got along on $5 to $15 per week. The twenty-four families in which there were no jobholders lived on charity from day to day. Half of these were supported by relatives and neighbors and the other half by religious groups or former employers. The debts of the families were widespread, with the neighborhood grocer being the most frequent creditor. Some families went hungry rather than let grocers gossip to neighbors about their conditions. Of the forty-six families that paid rent only fourteen were not behind. Nine of these families had already been put out on the street because of non-payment of rent, while about twenty

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[14] Ibid., March 27, 1931, 7 (Sec. 2).

others had been threatened by the constable with eviction.[15]

Since the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee disbanded in December 1931, the Social Service Bureau could not distribute as much aid in 1932 as it did in 1931. However, the Community Chest in an emergency appropriation of $111,055 (the initial appropriation had been $89,954)[16], made it possible for the Bureau to continue to make substantial contributions of financial relief to the needy. It was not until late 1933, when Federal aid began to come into New Jersey, that the Bureau could once again concentrate on casework care of families, rather than on the distribution of relief.

The facilities of both the Goodwill Home and Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army were taxed to their capacities after 1930. In 1931, the Goodwill Home and Rescue Mission provided 35,601 free lodgings (17% above 1930) and 89,011 free meals (13% above 1930).[17] The 1932 figures indicate a very slight increase over 1931. However, a significant change was that, in 1931, 1,137 odd and permanent jobs were obtained for the unemployed through the Mission's employment center, while in 1932 only 583 such jobs were obtained.[18] The Salvation Army carried 71 relief cases over from 1930 to 1931, and 178 cases over

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[15] Ibid., March 30, 1931, 9.

[16] Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments.

[17] Evening News, January 19, 1932, 8.

[18] Ibid., January 16, 1933, 5.

from 1931 to 1932 (a 150% increase).[19] In February 1933, it had 150 active cases.[20] The decrease in relief cases from January 1932 to February 1933 may be attributable to the decrease in the Community Chest appropriation to the Salvation Army from 1932 ($58,751) to 1933 ($37,197).[21]

The main activity of the Red Cross in 1931, as it had been previously, was the collection and distribution of used clothing to the indigent. Their family casework and financial aid was negligible. For instance, in December 1931, the Red Cross gave aid to seven families at a cost of $84.09. In March 1932 they discontinued relief in all cases other than families of hospitalized and disabled veterans.[22] In all of 1932 they aided 153 veterans' cases at a cost of $2,112 (during the year they got refunds of $850 from 49 of these cases).[23]

During the winter of 1931-1932, Congress purchased 85,000,000 bushels of wheat which were ground into flour and turned over to the American Red Cross for distribution to the poor through local chapters. Shortly thereafter Congress purchased 844,000 bales of cotton to be

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[19] Ibid., March 14, 1932, 6.

[20] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., Municipal Director of the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration in Newark, from Cordelle K. Ballard, Technical Advisor to the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration, unpaged, in file marked "Unemployment Relief Committee-General" at Franklin Conklin, Jr.'s office, Newark, N. J.

[21] Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments.

[22] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard.

[23] Evening News, January 25, 1933, 6.

made into cloth, which were also to be turned over to the American Red Cross for distribution through local chapters.[24]

The flour became available in Newark during the spring of 1932. The Red Cross, from a central storage station, distributed the flour to churches throughout the City where the needy could pick it up. However, abuses of this system were rampant, and in June 1932, the Red Cross set up five stations to be run by themselves and the Overseer of the Poor. Only those persons with orders from accredited social agencies or the Overseer's office were given flour.[25]

By the beginning of August, over 874,000 lbs. of flour had been distributed to approximately 15,000 persons. Homemakers used the flour for many things besides yeast-raised bread. Italians, for instance, made macaroni, ravioli, and lasagna from the flour. Since many persons had no ovens in which to bake the bread, certain bakeries would take the dough and bake it for about five cents for a seven pound loaf (if purchased one such loaf would cost thirty-five cents).[26] This practice, of course, was not appreciated by many bakeries that were interested in selling their own loaves of bread for thirty-five cents. There was one instance where over 200 Italians protested the beating of their baker who was baking bread from Red Cross flour for five cents

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[24] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 46.

[25] Evening News, August 2, 1932, 6.

[26] Ibid., August 5, 1932, 1.

a loaf. He was beaten by men who had warned him previously to stop baking such bread.[27]

The final distribution of flour occurred in April 1933.[28] Statistics of the total number of pounds distributed in Newark for the duration of the program, or the total number of persons aided by the flour, were not discovered, but one statistic is worth noting. According to the Urban League, of 3,011 Negro families in need during 1932, 1,933 of them received flour distributed by the Red Cross.[29]

Beginning in late October 1932, the Newark Red Cross received cotton cloth from the Federal Government. This cloth was made up into garments, sheets and towels by Red Cross volunteers, and were then distributed to the needy.[30] In January 1933, the Newark Red Cross claimed a total of 1,776 volunteers, 1,567 of which worked on this project.[31] However, a survey indicated that as of February 1, 1933, the Newark Chapter had received 1,260,000 yards of cloth, but had made up only 95,000 yards of it. The volunteers could not work nearly fast

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[27] Ibid., July 26, 1932, 10.

[28] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 46. The flour and cloth distribution programs were forerunners of the surplus commodity program inaugurated by the Federal Government in the fall of 1933.

[29] Evening News, February 14, 1933, 5.

[30] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard.

[31] Evening News, January 25, 1933, 6.

enough to meet the demands in Newark.[32] The last distribution of cloth took place in June 1933.[33]

During most of 1931, the Mount Carmel Guild distributed approximately $1,000 per week for relief in Newark. By 1932, this weekly distribution figure had doubled.[34] However, the Associated Catholic Charities were not forced to depend primarily on private alms for relief. Through a program of cooperation with the Overseer of the Poor, a most interesting system was put into effect. Catholic indigents would apply at the Overseer's office for relief. They would then be directed to a contact man in the office who would determine what parish the applicant belonged to and other pertinent information. Then, if their application for relief was approved, the family or individual would have no further contact with the Overseer. Relief checks would be turned over by the Overseer to the contact man, who in turn would deliver them to representatives of the Associated Catholic Charities in each parish. Each relief recipient would then be visited at his home by either a priest, caseworker, or lay worker, who would deliver to him the relief check and presumably attempt to rehabilitate him.[35] During 1932, the Mount Carmel Guild spent about $50,000 of its own money

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[32] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard.

[33] See footnote 28.

[34] Evening News, January 15, 1932, 7 (Sec. 2).

[35] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard.

in aiding 1,325 adults and 3,500 children.[36] These are low figures considering the large number of Catholic unemployed in Newark. Such low figures would certainly seem to indicate that the program of co-operation with the Overseer was successful.

The only other private welfare agency to have a program of co-operation with the Overseer of the Poor was the Children's Aid Society.[37] The Society was primarily interested in the placement and care of children in foster homes. During 1931, their casework increased 20% over 1930, largely because of referrals from the Overseer, where the City was giving financial aid to a family, but was unable to do proper casework to make sure the children got adequate care.[38] The Society's annual report for 1931 indicated that they were caring for 1,686 children from 676 families. Much of the Society's time was spent trying to provide physical relief for these families, and this, of course, meant less casework. The situation was indeed unfortunate, for investigations found that marital discord was growing as the depression got worse.[39] There was no alleviation of this situation in 1932.

Of all the minority groups in Newark, the Negroes found themselves in the worst position during the depression. The 1930 Census

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[36] Evening News, February 27, 1933, 7.

[37] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard.

[38] Evening News, October 16, 1931, 15.

[39] Ibid., January 22, 1932, 18.

counted 38,880 Negroes in Newark out of a total population of 442,337.[40] However, although they comprised only 8.8% of Newark's population, as of December 1931, they comprised over 33% of public relief cases (2,080 out of 6,186 cases). The total number of Negroes receiving relief was approximately 6,250, or one-sixth of the total Negro population.[41] This ratio continued, at least through 1938, when Negroes comprised over 37.5% of the relief cases.[42] One could thus expect that approximately one-third of the total relief cases handled by private relief agencies in Newark would involve Negroes. However, this was not the situation.

A 1932 survey conducted by the New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies aided by the National Urban League made a careful examination of the services rendered to Negroes by Newark's private relief agencies. The survey found that the Salvation Army did some work among Negro families but "does not encourage them to participate in the activities" since it had a "lack of sufficient funds and space." The Salvation Army ran homes for men and women, but not for Negroes, since "trouble arises when the two races are housed in the same dormitory."

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40 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 15th Census of the U.S.: 1930, Vol. III, Pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 191.

41 New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies and New Jersey Conference on Social Work, Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey (Newark, 1932), 48.

42 New Jersey State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population, Report of the New Jersey State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban Colored Population (Trenton, 1939), 17.

The survey came to the logical conclusion that Negroes did not participate in the Salvation Army's activities because they were not allowed to. It was a similar story with the Goodwill Home and Rescue Mission which gave meals to needy Negro transients but would not give overnight lodging to Negroes.[43]

The survey found no Negro families under the care of the Family Department of the American Red Cross. However, the majority of families applying for clothing distributed by the Red Cross during the winter of 1931-1932 were Negroes. The Family Welfare Department of the Newark Female Charitable Society accepted only temporary cases among young Negro families (they gave service to only fifty-two Negro families during 1930). Most Negro families were turned over to the Overseer of the Poor by the Society.[44]

Aside from the Urban League, the only major private welfare agency in Newark to devote any significant efforts towards helping Negroes was the Social Service Bureau. The survey reported that during 1931, 523 Negro families were under the intensive care of the Bureau, 200 of these receiving financial relief.[45] Since the Bureau gave aid to a total of 6,000[46] families in 1931, better than one out of twelve families helped were Negro. If only the fact that approximately one

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[43] New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey, 49.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 48.

[46] Evening News, April 6, 1932, 4.

out of twelve inhabitants of Newark was Negro is considered, the Bureau could be said to have done a fair job. However, where at least one-third of the families on relief were Negro, to have done almost eleven-twelfths of their work among whites is not a flattering statistic for the Bureau. On the positive side, the Bureau provided training opportunities (no doubt with Negro families) in field work for Negro students attending the New York School of Social Work.[47] All in all, the Social Service Bureau did more for the Negroes than any other non-sectarian family welfare agency in Newark. It is a moot question whether or not they should have devoted a greater proportion of their efforts to Negroes.

Since Catholic, Protestant and Jewish welfare agencies gave little or no aid to the Negroes, and since most of the non-sectarian private welfare agencies in Newark neither had the facilities nor the will to make substantial efforts to help the Negroes, obviously a lower percentage of Negroes got aid from private welfare agencies in Newark than any other ethnic or nationality group. Thus, a larger percentage of needy and unemployed Negroes applied for public relief than whites, since there were many more private relief facilities open to whites. As was pointed out in Chapter One, the only private welfare agency in Newark devoting its exclusive attention to Negroes was the Urban League.

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[47] New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey, 48.

During 1931 the Urban League performed the following services for its welfare clients: secured material relief from cooperating agencies (mostly from the Overseer of the Poor) for 793 families; secured homes or rooms at reasonable rates for 493 families; reestablished family contacts for 1,473 persons; secured transportation for 393 families, and advised 1,880 social adjustment cases.[48] Also, the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee made funds available to the Urban League for food and shelter for single Negro men and women who, up to this time, had no facilities open to them for shelter in Newark. These funds made possible in 1931, 12,931 free meals (a 400% increase over 1930) and 3,342 free night's lodgings (a 200% increase over 1930) to be provided for indigent Negroes.[49]

The importance of aid given to the Urban League by the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee for meals and lodging to Negroes can be seen by what happened when the Committee disbanded in late December 1931. The Executive Secretary of the New Jersey Urban League claimed that he had 112 men in his office who have not eaten in from one to five days. These men, legal residents of Newark, had been cared for by funds from the Committee until December 23, but now had nowhere to turn.[50]

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[48] Ibid., 54.

[49] Ibid., 55.

[50] Letter from Thomas J. Puryear, Executive Secretary, New Jersey Urban League to Fred Burnett, County Director of the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration, December 29, 1931, in file marked "Unemployment Relief Committee-General," at Franklin Conklin, Jr.'s office, Newark, N. J.

Subsequently Newark and the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration accepted the full responsibility of providing food and shelter for indigent Negroes.

During 1932, the Urban League placed 1,063 indigent Negro families into contact with relief giving agencies (a 25% increase over 1931).[51] It may be assumed that the League continued the same other activities in 1932 and in early 1933 as it did in 1931. There is little doubt that the plight of Newark's Negroes did not improve until Federal aid to Newark began in 1933. However, considering its lack of funds, the Urban League did the best job it could in helping Newark's Negro poor.[52]

Despite all indications that clearly pointed to the insufficiency of private resources to meet the problems of the depression, there were still those officials who believed that such resources, if they somehow could be reached, would alleviate conditions. Such a person was City Commissioner Egan, who, in March 1933, made the following statement to (most appropriately) an Optimist Club meeting:

> Newark is not like the city of old. The old quiet residential community is a thing of the past and in its place has come a city teeming with activity. With the change has come something unfortunate - the large number of outstanding citizens who used to live within the community's boundaries has dwindled. Many of them (have) moved to the suburbs and their home interests are there. We need the civic aid of those citizens and they should

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[51] Evening News, February 14, 1933, 5.

[52] For an exception to this, see Chapter Eight, for Thomas Puryear's abortive plan to ship Negroes South.

> give that aid to the city in which they have financial interests. Then the old-time community spirit will return and Newark will regain that place which civic pride had always given it.[53]

One month earlier than Commissioner Egan's statement, in February 1933, Franklin Conklin, Jr., Municipal Director of the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration, sent out a technical advisor to make a brief study of fifteen private relief agencies in Newark. The apparent purpose of the study was to ascertain the amount of relief work administered by these agencies, and the amount of duplication, if any, of cases among the agencies. The central finding of the study is most surprising. As of December 1932, all the major private relief agencies in Newark together were administering under 1,000[54] cases at a cost of approximately $35,000.[55] This may be compared to the $231,253 expended by the Overseer of the Poor in Newark for 12,000 cases in the same month.[56]

Where only one out of eight relief dollars for Newark's unemployed was supplied by private relief agencies, and where only one out of every thirteen relief cases in the City was handled by such agencies, conclusions reached by the author of the memorandum were obvious. He found that there was not a great deal of relief being administered by private

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[53] Ibid., March 15, 1933, 5.

[54] This figure represents cases for which private relief agencies provided both financial aid and casework service. The number of cases handled by such agencies where financial aid only was rendered was negligible, while only the Associated Catholic Charities and the Children's Aid Society would give casework service without also giving financial aid.

[55] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard. Other findings in Ballard's memorandum are noted elsewhere in this Chapter.

[56] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

agencies in Newark. Thus, duplication of cases among agencies was avoided.[57]

Mr. Ballard suggested in his study that experienced caseworkers from private agencies should not be wasted in the administration and distribution of financial relief. Private relief agencies should not continue to distribute and administer financial relief, but rather the City should assume full responsibility for such relief, and the private agencies should help service the cases of the Overseer (as the Associated Catholic Charities and the Children's Aid Society were already doing).[58] This suggestion, of course, is similar to the one made by the Executive Secretary of the Social Service Bureau (see above).

Mr. Ballard's recommendation was partially carried out in March 1933. Nine social workers were lent to the Newark Department of Public Welfare by private welfare agencies to help municipal social workers handle the nearly 14,000 families getting City relief. These social workers were assigned to the Overseer of the Poor, and their wages were paid by the Welfare Federation of Newark.[59] This system was known as "side by side" casework. However, since the program was not continued once the State took over the administration of relief in Newark, in April 1933, it is impossible to evaluate the job done by "side by side"

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[57] Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr., from Cordelle K. Ballard.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Evening News, March 9, 1933, 2.

casework.[60] In any event, private relief agencies neither had a large enough number of skilled caseworkers (probably under sixty), nor the funds to hire more, in order to cope with the thousands of families in need of social and industrial rehabilitation in Newark, from 1929 to 1933.

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[60] Rose Donovan, Casework Supervisor for the Newark Department of Public Welfare during the depression, personal interview with the author at Newark Department of Public Welfare, September 5, 1961. According to Miss Donovan, "side by side" casework was successfully carried out in 1936-1937 when the City once again administered its own relief.

CHAPTER FIVE

WORK-RELIEF UNDER THE NEW JERSEY EMERGENCY RELIEF ADMINISTRATION, 1931-1932

The increasingly serious conditions in Newark were duplicated in almost all New Jersey municipalities. Lack of administrative and financial preparation by the municipalities to meet relief needs of the approaching winter of 1931-1932 were obvious to those who were informed on the growing volume of unemployment and the decline of wages below a subsistence level. The Governor of New Jersey, Morgan F. Larson, alarmed by the situation, called together civic leaders to confer on emergency plans, and out of these conferences came the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration.[1] The N.J.E.R.A. was formally created by a Special Session of the New Jersey Legislature on October 13, 1931.[2]

Approximately $10,000,000 was appropriated for use by the Administration until June 30, 1932. Of this sum, up to $4,041,334 was to be used to reimburse municipalities for fifty per cent of wages paid on work relief projects (but not to exceed $1.00 per inhabitant in each municipality), and up to $3,232,067 was to be used to reimburse municipalities for forty per cent of direct relief expenditures (but not to exceed eighty cents per inhabitant in each municipality). The remainder

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[1] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 55. The New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration will hereinafter be referred to as the N.J.E.R.A.

[2] Ibid., 153.

of the $10,000,000 was for administrative expenditures, relief employment on county roads, and discretionary expenditures for municipal and county relief.[3]

Besides the discretionary funds which might later be available, Newark's maximum share of the $10,000,000 State fund was to be $442,337 for work-relief ($1.00 for each one of Newark's 442,337 inhabitants), and $353,869 for direct relief (eighty cents per inhabitant), or a total of $796,206. To get the $796,206, Newark would have to contribute $442,337 for work-relief ($1.00 per inhabitant), and $530,803 for direct relief ($1.20 per inhabitant), or a total of $973,140.[4] In addition to the $973,140, the City would have to pay the entire cost of materials used on work-relief projects. Short-term emergency notes were to be issued by Newark to pay for its contribution. As a City official stated at a City Commission meeting, Newark would have to raise, by taxation in 1933, an amount to finance the $973,140 in notes, and this would impose additional taxes upon home owners who were already in dire straits.[5]

Under the relief program, State-wide registration of the unemployed was required. Registration in Newark began on November 11, and soon afterward, Owen Malady, Overseer of the Poor, said that in order to get

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[3] N.J.E.R.A., Unemployment and Relief Conditions in New Jersey, 15.

[4] Evening News, September 29, 1931, 4.

[5] Ibid., November 20, 1931, 5.

food orders, the unemployed must register at one of 58 Newark schools.[6] By December 15, 24,223 unemployed had registered, not including members of organized labor who were registering through their unions. Of those registered, 15,998 were skilled and 8,225 unskilled.[7] Two months later, the total was approximately 37,000 according to the State Director of the N.J.E.R.A.[8] By the time the State work-relief plan ended in July 1932, over 38,000 unemployed persons had registered in Newark.[9]

Under the work-relief plan which was submitted by Newark to the N.J.E.R.A., projects totaling $2,187,265 were outlined, $1,190,252 of this amount for wages. Therefore, the full $442,337 was requested from the State. The total man-hours required for the projects were to be 1,954,400.[10] Under the N.J.E.R.A.'s statutes, skilled labor was to be allowed a maximum of $27 per week, while unskilled labor was to be paid no more than $20 per week.[11]

By mid-December, approximately 2,300 registered unemployed were working under the State plan.[12] Most of them were earning $20 a week for a forty-hour week. This meant a total weekly payroll of about

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[6] Ibid., November 11, 1931, 6; November 16, 1931, 5.

[7] Ibid., December 15, 1931, 8.

[8] Ibid., February 9, 1932, 8.

[9] Ibid., June 21, 1932, 11.

[10] Ibid., December 2, 1931, 1.

[11] N.J.E.R.A., Unemployment and Relief Conditions in New Jersey, 35.

[12] Evening News, December 16, 1931, 1.

$46,000, and since $1,190,252 in City and State funds were appropriated for wages, there would be enough money for twenty-six weeks of work. The State plan was due to terminate on June 30, and thus the appropriated funds would be consumed several weeks short of this date. This situation would not have been serious if there were only 2,300 registered unemployed in the City. But this was not the case, as 24,223 men were already registered as jobless, and the number was growing every day. Surely no work-relief program could be effective where less than ten per cent of the registered unemployed were given work-relief. The $20 per week wage was three times the amount an unemployed person would get on direct relief from food and milk orders, and thus three times the amount of a subsistence wage.

The wastefulness in Newark's program was still exhibited as of January 1, 1932, when there were 25,382 registered as unemployed representing 11,600 families with 59,847 dependents. Of the total jobless, 2,552 were working under the plan (almost all at $20 per week) and 7,180 families were getting direct relief from the Overseer.[13] This meant that over 15,000 jobless were expending their savings, or borrowing from relatives, friends or neighbors.

Supporters of the work-relief program in Newark who wished reforms as well as those few who were satisfied with the program received a major disappointment in early February. Chester Barnard, State Director

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[13] Ibid., February 15, 1932, 6.

of the N.J.E.R.A., announced his advocacy of a new State relief program in which there would be no more contributions by the State to municipal work-relief after May 30, 1932. In asking for the abolition of work-relief, the Director said an investigation revealed that only fifteen to fifty per cent value was being obtained from work-relief expenditures. Work-relief was often made when there was no need for the projects, and such forced work-relief generally resulted in a waste of public funds.[14] Prior to this, the Director had stated one of the reasons why work-relief should be discontinued was that municipalities trying to lower their tax rates used relief labor on regular municipal work, in order to save money, both through a lower schedule of wages under the work-relief plan, and through the State subsidy.[15] Comment on the value received by Newark from work-relief projects will be made below. However, there was no evidence found that Newark used relief labor on regular municipal work.

At the first City Commission meeting after Director Barnard's announcement, the Commissioners announced their intention to continue the work-relief program. In answer to a tampayer's suggestion that 1,000 of the men on work-relief be discharged to save money, a Commissioner pointed out that if the men stay employed, the State pays fifty per cent of their wage; but if they were released, they would go

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[14] Ibid., February 19, 1932, 1.

[15] N.J.E.R.A., Unemployment and Relief Conditions in New Jersey, 30.

to the Overseer for direct relief and the State would only pay forty per cent of this cost.[16]

Between January and May, the number of persons employed in Newark on N.J.E.R.A. work-relief projects doubled to over 5,000 men.[17] The policy of hiring men on these projects for a 40 hour week at $20 had been supplanted by a more realistic one of a twenty-four hour, three day work week, at $12 per week. Thus, at almost the same monthly wage cost, Newark was able to put twice as many men to work at a wage which was still well above the subsistence level.

In May the City Commission once again urged Director Barnard not to discontinue work-relief on June 1. The Commission claimed that over ninety per cent of the 5,000 persons on work-relief projects would need immediate direct aid from the Overseer if they were dismissed. Mayor Congleton, in responding to Director Barnard's assertion that work-relief projects were wasteful, said that he would prefer to see the City get less than 100% efficiency from the workers, as long as the workers kept their self-respect and morale. Furthermore, since the City had already spent over $150,000 on materials and equipment, abandonment of the work-relief program would entail a loss to the City to a

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[16] Evening News, February 17, 1932, 1. The Commissioner was correct since by February most men on work-relief were earning $12 per week. Fifty per cent of $12, or $6, is a larger sum than forty per cent of $7 which was the average cash value of aid given to a family on relief by the Overseer.

[17] Ibid., May 3, 1932, 2.

large extent on work already done.[18]

In a further plea to Director Barnard, the City Commission listed some of the projects undertaken under the N.J.S.E.R.A. plan. Some of the more useful projects included:

(1) Clearing of large area at Pequannock Watershed (part of Newark's water supply system), which had been destroyed by fire, and planting 550,000 trees in the area between the Watershed and Cedar Grove Reservoir (many of these trees replaced those cut by workers to supply 8,700 cords of wood for Newark's needy);

(2) Laying of 9,335 feet of water mains;

(3) Study and mapping of City's underground utilities by thirty-five unemployed engineers and draftsmen;

(4) Repair of forty-two police and fire buildings, and reconditioning of telephone and signal systems of both departments (thereby saving City about fifty per cent of contract costs), and

(5) Collection of tax arrears by white-collar workers ($50,000 more collected in first four months of 1932 than in same period of 1931).[19]

However, there were other projects which were noudoubt much less useful.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., May 11, 1932, 7.

Some of these included:

(1) Improvement of parks and shade trees by over 300 workers. (Since most parks in Newark have long been under county control, and since the streets of industrial Newark have never been known for their multitude of shade trees, it is hard to imagine how so many workers kept busy, especially since the municipal employees usually charged with these duties were presumably not neglecting their work);

(2) Draining and filling operations at Newark Airport to carry-off surface water (some of the approximately 300 men engaged on this project had been criticized for loafing)[20], and

(3) Clearing for future development an abandoned 112 acre boat building site at Port Newark by 150 men (since Port Newark in 1932 was relatively isolated from business and residential neighborhoods, the work site had the advantage of being removed from the hazards of curious onlookers, who might not see the reason why so many men were needed for such an unimportant project).[21]

On May 12, Director Barnard approved a one month extension of Newark's work-relief program from June 1 to July 1 on projects being completed under the approval of the N.J.E.R.A. However, the City could

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[20] Ibid., May 3, 1932, 5.

[21] Ibid., May 11, 1932, 7.

start no new projects, and could not increase the number of workers on the payroll during the extension period. Also, on approved projects completed during July, the State would give twenty-five per cent (rather than fifty per cent) reimbursement for wages.[22] Unfortunately, though, on June 30, the N.J.E.R.A. allowed Newark only $60,000 for work-relief in July, rather than the twenty-five per cent reimbursement for wages on all work-relief projects completed during that month. Thus, work-relief could continue for only seven days into July. Mayor Congleton immediately asked once more for a permanent extension of work-relief in Newark, and suggested lowering laborers' rates from fifty cents to thirty-five cents per hour to ease the financial burden on the State.[23]

July 7 was the last day of the N.J.E.R.A. sponsored work-relief program in Newark. All 6,492 men that were working under the program as of that date were released from their jobs. Mayor Congleton made one last plea to Director Barnard, but the Director refused to grant a further extension, and told the Mayor that Newark's work-relief program had lasted one week longer than any other city in the State and several weeks longer than most.[24] There was not to be another work-relief program in Newark until November 1933, when the short-lived Civil Works Administration

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[22] Ibid., May 12, 1932, 1.

[23] Ibid., June 30, 1932, 8.

[24] Ibid., July 7, 1932, 1.

assigned 120,000 jobs to New Jersey.[25]

The two main criteria in judging the effectiveness of Newark's work-relief program are: (1) The number of unemployed and their families that received aid from the program compared to the total number of unemployed and their dependents, and (2) The social and economic value of the aid to its beneficiaries. From December 1931, when the work-relief program actually began in Newark, to July 1932, there was a monthly average of 7,808 families representing 39,060 persons on the direct relief rolls of the Overseer.[26] From the few available figures it can be estimated that in the same seven month period, an average of between 4,200 and 4,800 men per month received work-relief wages.[27] According to the Overseer, about two-thirds of the men on work-relief were from families on the relief rolls (when a man got work-relief his family was not taken off the rolls, but rather the amount given to the entire family was reduced).[28] Also, since preference on work-relief projects was given to family heads, it may be assumed that only in rare instances was there more than one member of a family on work-relief. Thus, men from between 2,800 and 3,200 families, representing

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[25] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 172.

[26] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[27] Evening News, December 10, 1931, 7; December 16, 1931, 1; February 15, 1932, 6; May 3, 1932, 2; June 21, 1932, 11; July 7, 1932, 1.

[28] Ibid., June 21, 1932, 11.

between thirty-six and forty-one per cent of the 7,808 average monthly families on the relief rolls, received work-relief wages sometime during the seven month program. However, when the average monthly number of registered unemployed (approximately 32,000)[29] is divided into the monthly average of men receiving work-relief wages (between 4,200 and 4,800), it can be seen that only between thirteen and fifteen per cent of the total registered unemployed received work-relief wages during the program. But since it was found that as of January 1, 1932, 25,382 registered unemployed represented only 11,600 families,[30] it can be assumed that the average monthly registered unemployed figure of 32,000 represented less than 15,000 families. Thus, once again applying the monthly average of men receiving work-relief wages, it appears that between twenty-eight and thirty-two per cent of the total families represented on the registered unemployed lists had at least one member receiving work-relief wages some time during the seven month program. From the above figures it becomes obvious that, at least numerically, a significant percentage of families (both on and off the relief rolls) with unemployed persons received work-relief wages under the N.J.E.R.A. program.

The total State and City wage expenditures for work-relief were $1,279,824 from December to the end of the program in July.[31] Using

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[29] Ibid., December 2, 1931, 8; February 15, 1932, 6; June 21, 1932, 11.

[30] Ibid., February 15, 1932, 6.

[31] N.J.E.R.A., First Annual Report to the Governor and to the Senate and General Assembly (October 13, 1932), 68-69.

the 4,200 to 4,800 figure for the monthly number of men receiving work-relief wages, the average monthly wage per man would be approximately $40. However, $40 per month as a monthly average is too high since very few men worked the full seven months. Because some work-relief projects lasted a few months or weeks, and because Newark's policy after January 1932 was to spread the work to as many persons as possible, it must be assumed that many workers received wages for only short periods of time. Unfortunately, it is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the total number of men who received wages during the seven month program, and therefore impossible to estimate the actual average monthly wage earned by the workers. In any event, when it is considered that the average monthly relief payment per family by the Overseer during the 1931-1932 period was less than $20 per month, it is obvious that those families receiving work-relief wages fared, at least economically, better than their neighbors who might have been on direct relief.

Despite the fact that not all the work-relief projects undertaken in Newark were of a benefit to the City commensurate to their cost, it must be conceded that most of the projects were, even if overmanned, generally constructive. Thus, the attitude of the workers on such projects must have been positive, at least to the extent that they knew the work they performed was useful. With this in mind, it is obvious that work-relief, as long as it was constructive, served the social as well as the economic needs of its recipients far better than direct relief, and as is to be shown later, far better also than work-for-relief.

CHAPTER SIX

WORK-FOR-RELIEF UNDER THE NEW JERSEY EMERGENCY RELIEF ADMINISTRATION, 1932-1933

Under Ch. 215, Laws 1932, the Director of the N.J.E.R.A. was given complete discretionary power to fix conditions governing grants of emergency relief funds by the State to counties and municipalities. It was under this authority that Director Barnard abolished work-relief wages and instituted the work-for-relief plan in July 1932. Also, under the authority of Ch. 215, Director Barnard instituted a new plan of allocating funds to municipalities.[1]

Under Barnard's new plan, in Newark and other cities with 50,000 or more population, fifteen cents per inhabitant per month was to be spent by the municipality for relief before they could qualify for State aid. In this case, the State would contribute up to an additional fifteen cents per inhabitant per month. If more funds were needed, the State would then contribute up to fifty per cent of the additional expenditure, not to exceed fifteen cents per inhabitant per month. The additional municipal share would be the balance of the expenditure.[2] Thus, the maximum State share could not exceed thirty cents per inhabitant per month. Newark would have to expend $66,350.55 (fifteen cents per inhabitant) to receive $66,350.55 from the State. If more funds were needed, the State would then contribute up to fifty per cent of the

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[1] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 295.

[2] N.J.E.R.A., First Annual Report, 11.

additional cost of relief, or up to another $66,350.55 for a total maximum State contribution of $132,701.10.[3] Therefore, for the State to make its maximum contribution, the total relief expenditure in Newark would have to be $265,402.20 per month. However, a provision in Barnard's plan existed where if a municipality was unwilling or unable to finance any part of local relief expenditures, it could petition the N.J.E.R.A. for special grants. In such cases, the N.J.E.R.A. would take complete charge of the administration of relief in the municipality.[4]

According to Director Barnard, from December 1, 1931 to June 1, 1932, Newark spent on an average of fifty-nine cents per inhabitant per month. The State reimbursing Newark twenty-six cents of this, and the City bearing the other thirty-three cents. Under the new plan, a similar fifty-nine cent per month expenditure would find the State and the City each paying one-half of the fifty-nine cents.[5]

The new work-for-relief plan initiated as of July 1, 1932 by Director Barnard was based upon the premise that needy persons should be given relief, but that such persons should, in return, give the community labor if they were able, and if the community was able to provide the work opportunity. Relief allowances were not to be conditional upon the performance of work, for if the relief recipient

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[3] Evening News, July 15, 1932, 5.

[4] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 248.

[5] Evening News, June 16, 1932, 8.

was not able to work, or if the community was unable to devise opportunities for work, relief would be provided with no change in the amount. Thus, there was to be no quid pro quo relationship, but rather work done was to be a "free will" expression of gratitude for the community's aid.[6]

Early in July, Overseer Malady stated his plan for the operation of work-for-relief in Newark. He and his staff would first determine those relief clients able to work. Then supervisors would determine how much relief each applicant was getting, and this amount would regulate the number of hours the applicant would work. Malady believed most clients would only be required to work one day per week.[7] However, the City Commission and a representative of the N.J.E.R.A. worked out a slightly different plan for Newark. All able-bodied men would be required to work two eight-hour days per week, regardless of the amount of their food orders.[8] However, since most food orders were for $6 per week at this time, the labor of most relief recipients would be worth, on the average of $3 per day or about thirty-five cents per hour.

Work-for-relief began in Newark on August 18, 1932, when forty men, receiving municipal relief, were put to work two days a week. The Overseer estimated that approximately 8,000 men from the 9,100 families then on relief would eventually be able to work.[9] By the end

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[6] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 160-161.

[7] Evening News, July 8, 1932, 1.

[8] Ibid., July 12, 1932, 2.

[9] Ibid., August 18, 1932, 5.

of October, over 3,000 men from the 10,800 families on relief were engaged in work-for-relief projects.[10]

Under Barnard's plan, work-for-relief projects were sponsored both by the State and the counties as well as by the municipalities. State projects included emergency airports, expansion of the State's fire lane system, and reforestation of State-owned lands. Apparently, Newark workers were never employed on any State project. County projects included work on county roads and county park systems, and wood cutting on county property for fuel for the indigent.[11] The first instance of City participation with Essex County on a work-for-relief project was during January 1933. At that time, 495 Newarkers were called to work in the Essex County Park System for five consecutive days in return for relief given them and their families. However, when 119 of these men did not show up for work, they were informed that unless they gave satisfactory reasons for their absence, they would be taken off relief.[12] This threat was in direct violation of the underlying philosophy of work-for-relief, which was the voluntary rather than the obligatory aspect of the plan.

Director Barnard repeatedly stated that work-for-relief was to be a purely voluntary contribution to the municipality. Only where

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[10] Ibid., October 26, 1932, 2; Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[11] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 161.

[12] Evening News, January 19, 1933, 6.

objection to work in exchange for relief was sponsored by a "radical" group, would the N.J.E.R.A. back up a municipality in a policy of making work compulsory if relief was to be received.[13] In any event, despite threats by Newark officials in the abovementioned case, and in other cases of refusal to work, no evidence is available to indicate that any individual or family was ever taken off relief in Newark because of a refusal to labor on a work-for-relief project.

As of January 28, 1933, there were 45,986 registered unemployed in Newark, consisting of 24,490 skilled males, 10,733 unskilled males and 10,763 females.[14] There were also 13,526 cases on the relief rolls in Newark from which 3,485 persons were engaged in work-for-relief projects.[15] Of the 3,485, 990 were working under the Essex County Park Commission; 1,916 in the Department of Public Affairs (presumably working in the City's reservoir system, at Newark Airport or on the City Railway); 300 in the Department of Parks and Public Property, and 279 in the Department of Public Works.[16]

During February 1933, the number of relief cases in Newark reached 14,558, a new high.[17] However, during the same month, the number of

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[13] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 164.

[14] Evening News, February 1, 1933, 11.

[15] Ibid., February 4, 1933, 5; Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[16] Evening News, February 1, 1933, 11.

[17] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

men employed on work-for-relief projects substantially declined for the first time, from 3,485 to 2,536.[18] Cold weather and snow were partially responsible for this decline, since most of the work-for-relief projects were carried on outdoors. Also, though it is difficult to uncover any positive evidence, it seems reasonable to assume that with each succeeding month, more and more men refused to work on the projects (reasons for this assumption are below). There was no newspaper mention of the number of men on work-for-relief projects during March,[19] and this would seem to indicate that there was no great change from the February number.

In the early part of April 1933, the newly created Civilian Conservation Corps as its first project offered opportunities to 25,000 unemployed men in seventeen large cities to work in the Nation's forests.[20] Newark was one of the cities picked, and within two weeks almost 1,100 men had been recruited in Newark for the Corps.[21] This number increased steadily through the months, and it was reflected in

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[18] Evening News, March 18, 1933, 3.

[19] The N.J.E.R.A. kept no monthly records of the number of men in each municipality engaged in work-for-relief, but rather took spot checks by counties at various times. Neither did Newark keep any comprehensive records, and those records kept by various departments have long since been discarded. Therefore, the only available figures on the number of men engaged on work-for-relief projects were to be found in the newspaper.

[20] Ibid., April 6, 1933, 6.

[21] Ibid., April 14, 1933, 2.

the wavering interest in work-for-relief projects in Newark and elsewhere.

According to N.J.E.R.A. figures, in the last two weeks of August 1933, in all of Essex County there were only 3,682 persons engaged in work-for-relief.[22] Since Newark comprised approximately one-half of the County, there were probably under 2,000 men engaged in work-for-relief projects there at this time. In November 1933, the N.J.E.R.A. work-for-relief program came to a sudden end with the advent of the Civil Works Administration.[23] This Federal Agency instituted a National program of wage-paid work-relief.[24]

There were many reasons why work-for-relief was not a success in the number of men participating in the program. The main reason was that under the plan, Newark got no more aid from the State if there were 10,000 men on work-for-relief projects, than if there were just 1,000. In addition to this, as under the work-relief-plan, Newark got no reimbursement for supplies used on work-for-relief projects. Thus, there was no great incentive for Newark administrative personnel to strain their imaginations to devise work-for-relief projects. As under work-relief, there was a requirement under the work-for-relief program that no relief labor could be used on regular municipal enterprises. Municipal employees' groups in Newark, strongly organized and highly

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[22] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 163.

[23] Ibid., 169.

[24] Ibid., 295.

articulate, had succeeded so far in resisting any reduction in the number of municipal employees and would hardly have countenanced the use of relief labor on regular municipal enterprises. Another factor influencing the relatively small number of participants in the work-for-relief program was that persons on relief were voters. Since the City was in no great need of relief labor, to devise useless projects just to put men to work, would have antagonised too many voters. Selection of both work-for-relief projects and those who were to work on them was made by representatives of City officials and these officials could be held responsible for their policies at the next election. As was previously stated, threats to the unemployed that unless they came to work when called, they would be taken off relief, were never carried through. However, many men were unwilling to take the chance and made their "voluntary" contribution of labor. Obviously, though, when men ignored the threat, and were not taken off relief, others were encouraged to do likewise, and less and less men would show up for work as time progressed.

The morale of the men employed on work-for-relief projects in Newark could hardly have been very high. Since only a small percentage of the unemployed did work on such projects, this minority no doubt felt discriminated against. Also, the fact that the men received no wages for thier work made them even less enthusiastic about being called to work two days a week for the City. Furthermore, projects

selected for relief labor could scarcely be called challenging. The men worked at clearing brush, raking leaves, digging ditches, pruning trees, and at other manual tasks. There was no effort, as there had been under the work-relief program, to select projects to use to the best advantage the skills of the relief workers. Highly skilled and white-collar workers were no doubt humiliated by the jobs they had to perform as relief laborers.

Of what value were work-for-relief projects to Newark? The consensus of opinion from discussions with persons who participated in these projects seems to indicate that their value was minimal. Many of the jobs, such as leaf raking and tree pruning, could have been done seasonally by regular municipal employees. Ditch digging for the City Railway and drainage work at Newark Airport could have been done by mechanical means in much less time than by manual labor. Those projects undertaken by work-for-relief which were useful, such as work at the City Alms House and collection of City taxes in arrears, involved too few men to balance the projects of questionable usefulness, which involved the majority of relief laborers.

The work-for-relief program whether judged on its own merits, or compared to work-relief was a failure. Under work-for-relief there was neither incentive for the City to devise work opportunities, nor incentive for the unemployed men to work. As a result only a small percentage of men on relief ever participated in the program. Most of those men who did work under the plan did so only because they were afraid of being denied relief checks. They were engaged for the most

part on tasks calling for only the most menial of skills which no doubt furthered their discontent. However, under work-relief, the City had incentive to create work opportunities, since the more men the City put to work, the more State aid it got. Also, there was incentive for the unemployed to work, since they were paid wages which amounted to more than they would get under direct relief. Neither the unemployed nor the City gained by the work-for-relief program. Despite all the shortcomings of the work-for-relief program, it had one great advantage over work-relief, for it was much less expensive. New Jersey, pressed for funds and unwilling to impose new or increased taxes, could not afford to continue State wide work-relief after July 1932. Thus the work-for-relief program was an expedient until either the depression would end or the Federal Government would begin aiding the states.

In Newark, aside from devising more projects and exercising greater care in the selection of the most worthwhile of these, there was very little the City could have done to make the work-for-relief program a success. The failure of the program in Newark and elsewhere in the State was the fault of no one. The underlying assumption behind work-for-relief, that men would voluntarily work in return for relief given to them by a municipality, was never given a chance since there were insufficient work opportunities for all those on relief. But it seems doubtful, in any case, that this assumption could ever prove itself valid under any conditions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SEMI-OFFICIAL RELIEF AGENCIES IN NEWARK, 1932-1933

From December 1931 to August 1932 there was no major semi-official group representing both public and private social agencies in Newark. On July 20, 1932, City Commissioner Gillen suggested the formation of a citizen's committee to obtain private charity to supplement the aid given by the City through the Welfare Department. Commissioner Gillen stated that Newark would not be able to finance unemployment relief much longer without assistance from private charities and other sources besides State aid. All classes of Newark's population were to be represented on the committee, and key public figures would be picked to build a general group and draw upon private charity sources.[1] In its objective of supplementing City unemployment relief funds with private charity, the new committee would be similar to the disbanded Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee.

Commissioner Gillen's concern over the ability of Newark to continue unemployment relief may in part be explained by the termination of the N.J.E.R.A. sponsored work-relief program on July 7, 1932. Over 6,400 men working under the program had been released from their jobs on that date.[2] Under the work-for-relief program (see preceding chapter), instituted in July 1932, Newark would get much less funds from the State while demands for unemployment relief would increase. Thus, the only immediate solution for the problem would be to get more funds from

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[1] Evening News, July 21, 1932, 9.

[2] Ibid., July 7, 1932, 1.

private sources. Yet conditions in Newark in the summer of 1932 were much worse than those of December 1931, when the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee had to disband, partly because of financial difficulties. Were there any hitherto untapped private sources that a new citizen's committee could uncover?

One semi-official group that had been concerned with the unemployed prior to August 1932 was the Newark Committee for Employment. This was a volunteer group of prominent business people that had been organized in January 1932 as a job-finding committee.[3] After several months it must have become apparent to the group that there were very few jobs to be found. They thus turned to more practical pursuits and began operation in an abandoned church of a soup kitchen and recreational center for unemployed men. In two months of operation, from May to July 1932, the number of men served daily in the soup kitchen increased from 350 to 500. Newark was one of the sponsors of the project, although the approximate monthly cost of $175 to operate the facilities was borne by volunteer contributions. Also, a doctor and dentist contributed their services several days a week at the center in order to care for the unemployed men, most of whom suffered from either food or teeth problems.[4] Soon after the City Commissioners announced their intentions of organizing a citizen's committee, they stated that members of the

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[3] Ibid., February 8, 1933, 8.

[4] Ibid., July 21, 1932, 9.

Newark Committee for Employment would be the nucleus of the new committee.[5]

An interesting sidelight involving the Newark Committee for Employment occurred just prior to that group's absorption into the newly formed citizen's committee. Late in July the Committee for Employment, in order to meet increased demands on its soup kitchen, publicly solicited food dealers and provision merchants for excess goods, mainly perishable, which were "edible but not salable."[6] This ill-advised appeal was especially noteworthy when it is considered that the City of Newark was an official sponsor of the kitchen. It is difficult to understand why at a City Commission meeting the day after the appeal was made, only one person rose to speak against the idea. This person was a Communist who protested that the workers would be forced to eat food rejected by other people.[7] It must be assumed that sufficient funds were found to obtain "salable" food for the unemployed, since no further public solicitation for "edible but not salable" food was mentioned in the Newark Evening News.

On September 14, 1932 the Newark Citizen's Relief Committee was officially launched at a City Commission meeting. The Commission voted to let Mayor Congleton name an executive committee to guide the group.[8]

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[5] Ibid., July 26, 1932, 1.

[6] Ibid., 15.

[7] Ibid., July 27, 1932, 5.

[8] Ibid., September 15, 1932, 2.

Within two days the Mayor had appointed forty-eight members for the executive committee and had named Franklin Conklin, Jr. as Chairman.[9] Conklin had formerly been head of the Newark Committee for Employment.

The executive committee of the Newark Citizen's Relief Committee stated, at their first meeting, that its purpose was to provide Newark with an integrated program of private relief, supplementing public relief, adequate in scope, and economically and efficiently administered. Other important aims of the Citizen's Committee were the collection and distribution of clothing and food, and the providing of shelter and employment in collaboration with City departments. The executive committee was divided up into four sub-committees each to work with the Overseer of the Poor Malady. Members of the Newark Committee for Employment were made part of these sub-committees. The four sub-committees were: (1) material relief; (2) employment (including clothing and furniture collections through block-aid drives); (3) maintenance of morale through recreation rooms and character developing agencies, and (4) community organization and cooperation.[10] As shall be pointed out later, only one of these sub-committees (for employment and block-aid drives) was effective in accomplishing its mission.

One of the first obligations assumed by the Newark Citizen's Relief Committee was to reopen and run the municipal lodging house for

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[9] Ibid., September 17, 1932, 1.

[10] Ibid., September 26, 1932, 2.

homeless men.[11] This lodging house had been converted from an old school, and had been opened in late November 1931.[12] During the winter of 1931-1932, it had not only operated at full capacity (468 beds), but had been forced to turn many men away each night.[13] Under the City operation, the lodging house had a $2,000 per month payroll. Under the Citizen's Committee, it cost the City $300. per month for two boiler firemen.[14]

In January 1932, Franklin Conklin, as Chairman of the Unemployment Relief Committee, made a personal inspection of the municipal lodging house. In finding the place immaculately clean, Conklin made several interesting observations. He found: "The colored folks have a room together, the young white men are located together, where possible, and the physically unfit are segregated in a room called the hospital." Men coming into the lodging house first surrendered their clothing (which was fumigated in a special machine) and then got pajamas, sheets, and blankets. They were also required to take a shower. In the morning they got their clothes back and received a fifteen cent meal ticket, good at

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[11] Ibid., September 30, 1932, 1.

[12] Ibid., November 28, 1931, 3.

[13] Ibid., February 25, 1932, 11.

[14] Ibid., September 30, 1932, 1.

any restaurant for breakfast (rolls and coffee).[15]

It was decided by the City and the Citizen's Committee, in late October 1932, to move the recreation center and soup kitchen formerly run by the Newark Committee for Employment to a building next to the municipal lodging house.[16] During September the soup kitchen had been feeding on an average of 575 men a day. Eighteen men prepared and served the meal, for which they got free food and lodging. With proper facilities, it was felt they could feed 1,800 men a day.[17] This prediction was almost entirely justified. With the new building in operation, the kitchen served an average of 1,295 men in December 1932, and 1,421 in January 1933.[18]

During the depression, the need for clothing by the unemployed and their dependents was acute. In Newark, as elsewhere, many charitable groups made either periodic or continuous clothing drives. With the sharp increase in unemployment and hardship in the fall and winter of 1932-1933, it was imperative that clothing be provided for the thousands of needy. A house-to-house canvass for used clothing was made in the

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[15] Memorandum of January 27, 1932 of Franklin Conklin, Jr. in file marked "Unemployment Relief Committee - General", at Franklin Conklin, Jr.'s, office, Newark, New Jersey. See, also, Evening News, November 28, 1931, 3. Meal tickets cost Newark approximately $2,000 a month, and they were eliminated in July 1932 under the pretext that free breakfasts were served at several places in downtown Newark. See Evening News, June 25, 1932, 4.

[16] Evening News, October 26, 1932, 2.

[17] Ibid., September 15, 1932, 2.

[18] Ibid., January 14, 1933, 16.

fall of 1932 by the Newark Committee for Employment aided by the Boy Scouts, the Rotary, and the Kiwanis Club.[19] However, this drive was not thorough, because it lacked the manpower to actually go from house-to-house. There was still an urgent need for a systematic and thorough clothing drive in Newark.

In June 1932, the New Jersey Legislature passed the Block-Aid Plan (first instituted in New York City a few months previously) to raise funds "by voluntary mass contributions for the relief of the unemployed and dependent." Municipalities were divided into subdivisions, usually city blocks, and voluntary contributions of not less than ten cents per week were solicited. All funds raised by this plan were to be turned over to the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration. The State-wide campaign took place October 17-27, but was a failure, and the movement dissolved.[20] No evidence was discovered that Newark participated in this campaign. However, the Block-Aid principle was used by the Newark Citizen's Relief Committee in their clothing and furniture drive.

In early November 1932, the Newark Citizen's Relief Committee decided on a City-wide solicitation of clothing and furniture.[21] It was hoped

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[19] Ibid., August 23, 1932, 11.

[20] Macneil, Seven Years of Unemployment Relief in New Jersey, 1930-36, 47. The Block-Aid Plan is not to be confused with the Block Campaign launched by the Communist party in 1931. The Block Campaign's aim was to gather relief clients living in one city block or in one small neighborhood and to develop a series of loosely knit organized units. See Macneil, 209-210.

[21] Evening News, November 11, 1932, 11.

that in using the Block-Aid system the greatest possible amount of goods would be collected. Many years prior to the depression, Newark had been divided up into sixteen wards for election purposes. It was decided, by the Committee, to recruit volunteers in each ward, and to administer the drives separately for each ward. The drive began November 28 in the Eleventh Ward, and it was immediately apparent that the Block-Aid system had worked. Within a month canvassing had begun in many other of the City's wards. From all available evidence it appears that the collections in each ward were satisfactory.[22] A reason for this was the success of the Committee in recruiting numerous volunteers in each ward. For instance, one of the larger wards of the City had almost 1,000 men engaged in the canvassing.[23] During December, the Citizen's Relief Committee received 26,246 articles, 10,000 of which were rehabilitated by unemployed workers. Also, during that month, 23,560 items were distributed by the Committee. However, the demand was still growing for children's clothes, shoes, and coal and oil stoves.[24] Subsequent drives continuing through February helped meet these demands.

Although the Newark Citizen's Relief Committee was successful in its Block-Aid drives for used clothing and furniture, it was not willing

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[22] Minutes of November 29, 1932 meeting of the Block-Aid and Commissary Plan Committee of the Citizens' Relief Committee, in file marked "Citizens' Relief Committee" at Franklin Conklin, Jr.'s office, Newark, N.J.

[23] Only men were used as canvassers by the Citizen's Committee.

[24] Evening News, January 14, 1933, 16.

to attempt to raise funds from private sources to supplement municipal relief funds. The winter of 1932-1933 saw the City's relief bill increase from $247,621.67 for 11,055 families in November, to $319,175 for 14,558 families in February.[25] During 1931 the Citizen's Unemployment Relief Committee had been able to raise, for distribution to the needy, 16.7% of the amount expended by the City for municipal relief. Even if the new Committee had tried to raise funds, it could not come close to matching this figure especially with almost a 100% increase in unemployment between December 1931 (23,675), and January 1932 (45,140).[26]

In March 1933, the Citizens' Relief Committee in trying to heighten the morale of the unemployed through self-help put forward a two-point program. Firstly, an unemployment relief division was set up to start an intensive spring campaign to create jobs through inducing home owners to undertake repairs. Clergymen and business groups were to help this renovating drive through newspaper and billboard advertisements. Secondly, a garden division was established to inaugurate a City-wide effort to have vacant land opened to the needy, on which they could grow their own supply of vegetables. The New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration agreed to let the cost of seeds and seedlings be charged off against relief appropriations. Also, the Newark Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Parks and Public Property, and the Welfare

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[25] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[26] Evening News, December 2, 1931, 8; January 14, 1933, 16.

Bureau agreed to support the garden movement.[27]

On March 29, 1933, the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration took control over the administration of all relief work in Newark. Franklin Conklin, Jr., as the Municipal Director for this body, became the chief administrator of relief in Newark.[28] The Citizens' Relief Committee was closely incorporated into the new organizational setup, and the Committee and its functions were made exclusively responsible to the Municipal Director and his deputies.[29]

In its six and one-half month existence, prior to the State take-over of relief in Newark, the Newark Citizens' Relief Committee became an increasingly important agency in the City of Newark. This was despite the fact that the Committee neither solicited nor distributed relief funds, and despite an extremely small budget (funds came from the City, individual volunteer contributions, and waste paper drives). The Committee's effectiveness was derived from the high calibre of its members (all unpaid volunteers), and especially from the leadership these members supplied in the struggle against the depression. The Committee saved the City money on the municipal lodging house, it improved the facilities of the soup kitchen, it ran successful clothing drives, and it came up with constructive new ideas. It is thus no

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[27] Ibid., March 18, 1933, 3.

[28] Conklin was appointed Municipal Director for the New Jersey Emergency Relief Administration in Newark, in October 1932. He also remained Chairman of the Citizens' Relief Committee.

[29] Ibid., March 29, 1933, 1.

wonder that when Newark lost administrative control over its relief program, the State should retain the Citizens' Relief Committee as an integral part of its own organization for relief in Newark.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MUNICIPAL RELIEF IN NEWARK, 1932-1933

From December 1931 to January 1932, the number of cases on the relief rolls in Newark declined from 7,180 to 6,865, and the total relief expenditures declined from $154,368 to $136,177.[1] There was not to be another decline in the number of relief cases until April 1933. The decline in the number of relief cases may have been attributable to the increasing number of men engaged on work-relief projects under the N.J.E.R.A. (see Chapter Five). However, despite the decrease, Frederick Burnett, County Unemployment Relief Director for the N.J.E.R.A., estimated that only fifteen per cent of the registered unemployed in Essex County could be cared for by the existing programs of relief.[2]

Expenditures of the Overseer of the Poor in February 1932 totalled $208,345. This was the highest monthly total since the beginning of the depression. The number of families on relief, 7,551, was also a new peak.[3] Malady claimed that the reason for the increase was the laying off by Essex County of 550 men working under a N.J.E.R.A. work-relief project.[4] However, a 5.5% drop in industrial employment in the Newark area between November 1931 and February 1932, was also an

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[1] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[2] Evening News, January 15, 1932, 7. Over one-half the population of Essex County lived in Newark.

[3] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[4] Evening News, March 18, 1932,7.

important factor in the increase.[5] According to the Director of the N.J.E.R.A., Chester Barnard, as of February, out of a population of 442,337 in Newark, 37,000 persons needed employment relief, and 30,000 needed dependency relief.[6]

Between February and July 1932, the number of relief cases increased 15%, from 7,551 to 8,631. Monthly relief expenditures reflected a decrease from $188,225 to $144,967,[7] because of the tremendous coal bills which were paid by the City during February. The increase in the number of relief cases was attributed in part to a 6% drop in industrial employment in the Newark area during the same period.[8]

The fact of decreasing tax revenues and increasing relief expenditures led to agitation for salary cuts for municipal employees. Mayor Congleton pointed out that the major labor groups in the City had already submitted to pay cuts. The wages of bricklayers decreased 13%; carpenters, 15%; electricians, 20%; painters, 12%; tile and marble setters, 12%; sheet metal workers, 25%; plumbers, 9%; plasterers, 12%; lathers, 18%; and ordinary laborers, 24%. The Mayor in arguing for salary cuts for municipal employees said: "Poor wages are better than

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[5] New Jersey Department of Labor, The Industrial Bulletin, Vols. V, VI (December 1931 - March 1932).

[6] Evening News, February 9, 1932, 8.

[7] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[8] New Jersey Department of Labor, The Industrial Bulletin, Vol. VI (March 1932 - July 1930).

none."[9] On July 6, 1932, despite opposition from all City employee groups, the City Commission passed ordinances which cut the salaries of all City workers (including Board of Education Employees) from 1% to 16%. It was estimated that this cut would save the City $600,000 for the last six months of 1932.[10]

In late June, Malady announced some major changes in relief policies of his Department. Starting July 1 grocery orders would be given every two weeks instead of weekly. All requisitions for food would be on the basis of $1.00 per week per person. The maximum grocery order to any family would be $5.00 per week (previously approximately 8% of grocery orders were for $6.00 and $7.00). Exceptions to this would be made only after a conference with the district secretary.[11] The maximum amount of rent to be paid per month remained at $20. The City still would not pay for gas, electricity, or clothing. Cash relief of from $1.00 to $2.50 per week would be allowed for such things as carfare and clothing, where one or more members of a family had obtained jobs, other than as laborers. Finally caseworkers would ascertain whether the property of a person was more of a liability or an asset before accepting or rejecting him for relief. Prior to this,

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[9] Evening News, June 1, 1932, 2.

[10] Ibid., July 7, 1932, 2.

[11] At this time Newark was divided up into five districts for the administration of relief. Each district had a secretary that was in charge of caseworkers in that district.

persons were often arbitrarily rejected for relief on the basis that they owned property, even where such property yielded no income.[12]

The number of personnel in the Poor and Alms Department increased steadily (along with unemployment) after Malady's appointment in February 1931. At that time, the Department had about sixty employees, including nineteen caseworkers. By June 1932, there were 134 in the Department, including approximately thirty-five trained caseworkers. The average caseload of these workers was between 78 and 135.[13] Supposedly the ideal number of cases to handle was between forty and forty-five. Of course, the balance of the workers in the Department were engaged in keeping records.

Under the work-for-relief program instituted in July 1932 by the N.J.E.R.A. (see Chapter Six), salaries of all the clerical help in the Poor and Alms Department were cut 1% (they were earning $20 to $27 per week).[14] Malady, in stating that the pay cut was regrettable, claimed that many of these workers worked into the night with no overtime pay. Caseworkers were also limited to earning $27 a week by N.J.E.R.A. Malady was asked whether he got a full day's work out of the caseworkers for that amount. He answered in the affirmative, saying: "Full days and full nights too, sometimes. These people also worked

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[12] Ibid., June 24, 1932, 18.

[13] Ibid., June 21, 1932, 11.

[14] Ibid., July 9, 1932, 7.

Saturdays and Sundays when they had to." During June, the caseworkers had made 13,300 house visits in a check-up of families receiving relief.[15]

During the same City Commission meeting at which Malady defended his staff, he presented the Commission with some distressing news. He said that a survey showed that many families were having difficulties paying electric, gas and insurance bills. Malady suggested that such bills might soon have to be paid by the City. Also, he said that 250 more persons were needed to carry out the new State requirements for the N.J.E.R.A. work-for-relief program.[16]

As of July 8, 1932, the 6,492 Newark men engaged on work-relief projects sponsored by the N.J.E.R.A. were laid off.[17] This helped bring about a 20% increase in the amount of public relief cases in Newark, from 9,077 in July, to 10,777 in September.[18] The reason why there was not even a greater increase on Newark's relief rolls was that many of the families of the 6,492 had been on the rolls right along.[19] This was because these men had the largest families and needed both work-relief and direct relief to exist. From the time the 6,492 men were laid off, with the termination of the N.J.E.R.A. work-relief program,

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[15] Ibid., July 12, 1932, 2.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., July 7, 1932, 1.

[18] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[19] Evening News, July 9, 1932, 7.

relief expenditures gradually forced Newark towards bankruptcy.

On July 12, 1932, at a City Commission meeting, Commissioner Howe said that he had reports that in two Southern states there were signs advising the unemployed to come to Newark for aid. Owen Malady, Overseer of the Poor, then pointed out that he had spent over $3,000 to send itinerants back to their legal residence, mostly Negroes to the South.[20]

A week later Commissioner Egan said that more drastic methods would have to be used in moving dependent families, especially Negroes, out of Newark. He said: "I feel there are thousands of such families that have been unloaded on Newark from other municipalities and states."[21]

Commissioner Egan immediately found support for his statement that more drastic methods for moving Negroes out of Newark must be used. However, this support came from a most unlikely source. Thomas L. Puryear, Executive Secretary of the New Jersey Urban League, said he believed that one-third of Newark's Negroes would be willing to return to their southern homes if a sympathetic approach were made to them, and if they were offered the fare. Puryear estimated that 90% of Newark's Negroes were unemployed and living off municipal aid, or charity from friends and relatives.[22] He added that Negroes think of the North

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[20] Ibid., July 12, 1932, 2.

[21] Ibid., July 29, 1932, 1.

[22] See below for Puryear's retraction of this estimate.

as the promised land and were continuing to migrate North. The Urban League had launched a national campaign to get them to stay in the South, but it had so far been unsuccessful. Puryear said that the crime rate among Negroes in Newark had risen because they could not get enough to eat. In the South, they would at least have their small farms. Puryear concluded his statement by asserting that although the cost for relief to Negroes in Newark is great, the social problem caused by so many idle hungry Negroes was worse.[23]

No sooner had Puryear made his suggestion than Owen Malady, Overseer of the Poor, appointed Puryear as his liaison officer to induce Negro families to accept City aid and return to the South. Puryear said he would ask recipients of Red Cross flour, which was being distributed by the Urban League (see Chapter Four), if they wanted to go back South. He would also work through Negro churches in his campaign. In what must be considered the most naive of statements, Puryear said to Malady: "We must be careful that my people do not get the mistaken idea that an attempt is being made to run all the colored people out of town." Malady promised that he would strive to avoid any appearance of a forced eviction idea. Malady said that the Urban League must try to show the Negroes the true picture of the situation, that there is no discrimination against Negroes in Newark, but that they would be better off, eligible for more relief, and more apt to find food and

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[23] Ibid., July 21, 1932, 2.

lodging in the South than in Newark, Puryear, continuing in his vein of naivete, concluded the conference with: "It's dynamite, but I think we can show them the truth without great difficulty. The first group to reach their homes in the South will be the best advertisement of our new policy."[24]

As part of the campaign to ship Negroes South, Malady sent letters to the Governors of North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Virginia, telling them of Newark's efforts to send needy Negro indigents to their former homes, and asking cooperation in this. In the letter, Malady said that most of the Negro families coming to Newark did not have the required five years residency, and, since Newark had neither the work nor the funds to aid them, they would be better off home with their friends and relatives.[25] If Malady expected any such cooperation, he was bound to be disappointed, for conditions in these Southern states were no doubt worse than those in Newark.

Malady's first (and apparently only) reply to his letter came from Virginia. Governor Pollard said that he would do everything in his power to spread the word throughout Virginia that work was not plentiful in Newark.[26] It would certainly strain the imagination

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[24] Ibid., July 22, 1932, 1.

[25] Ibid., July 23, 1932, 1.

[26] Ibid., July 25, 1932, 4.

to visualise Governor Pollard traveling through Virginia, trying to dissuade Negroes from migrating to Newark.

Newark's Negroes undoubtedly appreciated the solicitude directed towards their welfare by the Newark Evening News. In an editorial applauding the efforts of both Puryear and Malady in trying to keep Negroes South, and sending those in Newark back South, the paper said: "Living conditions in their native countryside are far better for them than the City tenements in a harsher climate."[27] It is most surprising that the Evening News was not one of the first voices in the City denouncing the outrageous plan of Puryear and Malady.

Opposition to Puryear and Malady's plan rapidly developed in the Negro community. A meeting of Newark's Negro leaders (most of them clergymen) was held in order to determine just what should be done to combat the plan. Both Malady and Puryear spoke at this meeting, and tried to explain that they were not trying to single out Negroes to send home. Apparently their explanations were in vain. The audience heckled both of them, and concluded their meeting by naming a committee to convey their opposition to the plan to the City Commission. Their grounds for opposition were, quite justifiably, that the plan singled out Negroes in the removal process.[28]

As indignation among Newark's Negroes and other enlightened inhabi-

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[27] Ibid., July 23, 1932, 12.

[28] Ibid., July 27, 1932, 7.

tants increased, Puryear was forced into retreat. He retracted the statement he had previously made that 90% of the Negroes were unemployed, and added that this was "ridiculously untrue". He claimed that he meant to say that 90% of the Negroes, without legal residence in the City, were not employed. Puryear further stated: "I want to deny emphatically that I at any time have been a party to any movement to send Negroes out of Newark."[29] What the role of other officials of the New Jersey Urban League was during this episode was not ascertainable. Puryear remained in his post as Executive Secretary until January 1, 1934.

To close the incident, the Evening News also retreated, and in an editorial withdrew its previous encouragement of Puryear and Malady's plan. It said that the controversy over the transfer of indigent colored people should be dropped, for the entire proposition had been misunderstood. (The Evening News would have been a bit more forthright had they substituted the word "understood" for "misunderstood".) The paper claimed that there was no understanding that the movement would be confined to colored people, but rather it was to be applied to all families who claimed poor and alms support without the right to do so. "Each community must take care of those who are bona fide residents", concluded the editorial.[30] This was the last mention of the plan in the Evening News.

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[29] Ibid., July 29, 1932, 1.

[30] Ibid., August 2, 1932, 12.

Statistics for the period January 1, 1932, to September 1, 1932, indicate several interesting facts about Newark's efforts to ship destitute families to their last place of legal settlement. Firstly, during the entire eight months, only 114 families, or about three families per week, were shipped out of Newark. Secondly, only thirty-four of these families were Negroes, while seventy-nine were white (somehow one poor Indian family had found their way to Newark).[31] Since it must be assumed that the Poor and Alms Department was not more eager to ship white families out of Newark than Negro families, it would appear that a substantial portion of destitute families, without legal residence in Newark, were white. Thus, Malady's and Puryear's efforts to single out Negroes to send back South were unjustified as well as discriminatory.

In late July 1932, Commissioner Egan disclosed some encouraging news. Making a 2:00 a.m. tour of Newark's two downtown parks, he reported that in Washington Park he found only fifty persons sleeping, and in Lincoln Park there were 100 asleep on the benches. The municipal lodging house was running well under its full capacity of 469 beds, with only 300 tenants. Presumably, many men preferred to sleep in the outdoors during summer, or perhaps it was the thought of the shower and the clothes fumigation, that they would have to undergo

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[31] Ibid., September 2, 1932, 5 (Sec. 2).

at the municipal lodging house, that kept them away from that place (see Chapter Seven). In any event, Commissioner Egan was encouraged by his occupied park bench count because it reflected a decrease from previous nocturnal counts made during the month.[32]

According to Malady, between March 1 and August 1, Newark saved $15,021 on coal and milk bills. This was because the City received a 5% discount on coal, and a 3% discount on milk. However, it was disclosed that the milk discount was extended to the City only because it purchased Grade B milk for relief clients. For the five month period the total saving on milk had been $9,321.[33] Thus, to save about $1,860 per month, the City made the needy (who, of course, were usually the most undernourished) drink milk with a lower butterfat content (and therefore with less nutritional value), than those who could buy their own milk.

During September 1932, several men in the Newark Department of Public Welfare were sent to investigate grocery orders. The investigation indicated that almost all storekeepers in Newark violated the City law relevant to grocery orders. One of the most common violations was the redeeming of orders for cash, a practice specifically prohibited by municipal ordinance. What made this violation extremely reprehensible was the fact that usually the cash given was discounted. Thus, a $4.00 grocery order would be redeemed by a shopkeeper for $3.50

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[32] Ibid., July 26, 1932, 1.

[33] Ibid., September 2, 1932, 5 (Sec. 2).

in cash. Another violation, of a less serious nature, was the redeeming of orders for goods not authorized by law, such as tobacco, pineapples, and cherries. In thirty stores visited in various parts of Newark, nine sold material for making liquor, two provided bootleg liquor, thirteen redeemed grocery orders for cash, and six sold cigars and cigarettes.[34]

In one store with a sign in the window that read "Trade your City checks here for economy", an investigator went in with a $4.00 grocery order. He asked for bootleg liquor, but the owner refused. Instead the owner showed him how to make his own beer, and supplied him with a complete outfit for brewing it. This consisted of a bottle capping machine, malt, hops, rye, sugar, yeast, and bottle caps. Then to show he was a regular fellow, this "do-it-yourself" storekeeper threw in for good measure a pound of candy and twenty cents in change.[35]

In December 1932, Commissioner Ellenstein of the Public Works Department came up with a novel plan to aid both the unemployed and the City treasury. This plan was called "Winter Your Neighbor." A person able to help a family would apply to the Public Works Department for the name and address of a needy neighbor. An additional investigation would be made by the Overseer of the Poor to see how the family was faring, and a full report of this investigation would be made to the volunteer. The volunteer would then make personal contact with his neighbor and help supervise in the expenditure of the grocery check

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[34] Ibid., September 14, 1932.

[35] Ibid.

from the Overseer. In addition, the volunteer would contribute to the support of his charge for the rest of the winter. It was estimated that $40 for a family of five would suffice for the remaining winter months. Commissioner Ellenstein said the value of this plan was two-fold. Firstly, since there were not enough caseworkers to supervise the over 12,000 families on relief, personal contact between the volunteer and relief recipient would be a great help in rehabilitation. Secondly, better value could be obtained from relief funds under the supervision of a volunteer, since grocery checks sent to indigent families were often misspent.[36]

The "Winter Your Neighbor" plan never caught public favor, for three weeks after its introduction, there were only pledges for money for 110 families.[37] Commissioner Ellenstein made only one further public effort to promote the plan, and claimed that over 10% of those not receiving aid from the City could assist in the plan.[38] It is not difficult to understand why people were not enthusiastic about "Winter Your Neighbor." Perhaps the best comments on the plan were made by two Socialists at a City Commission meeting. The attacked "Winter Your Neighbor" as containing so many "possibilities for further humiliation, demoralization and pauperization of those workers whom necessity has forced to accept relief", and as an "outworn and antiquated plan," a

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[36] Ibid., December 17, 1932, 3.

[37] Ibid., January 7, 1933, 7.

[38] Ibid., January 12, 1933, 7.

"revival of medieval feudalism."[39] These men were right, for such a plan of personalized almsgiving harkened back to the medieval concept of charity as an act of piety, and negated its modern concept that society is responsible for the support of those whose services it cannot use profitably.

Relief expenditures for 1932 reached $2,397,152.[40] Of this amount, the State contributed $772,698. Thus, the total City contribution of $1,624,454 was roughly the same as the 1931 total relief expenditure of $1,639,073. However, during 1932, Newark also had an expenditure of over $500,000 for salaries and materials under the N.J.E.R.A. work-relief program. On December 20, 1932, Newark sold an eight year $2,336,000 bond issue, $1,064,000 for public works and $1,272,000 for poor relief. This was the first long-term bond issue that the City had offered for sale since May 1932.[41]

Early in January 1933, Newark announced a 6% discount for advance payment of 1933 City taxes due June 1, 1933. Usually, no more than 3% was allowed for advance payment of taxes. However, Newark needed the money early for two important reasons. First, if they got the money sooner, Newark would have to borrow less money from the banks,

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[39] Ibid., January 18, 1933, 6.

[40] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets; Evening News, January 25, 1933, 15.

[41] Evening News, December 20, 1932, 8.

and thereby their credit position would be stronger. Second, the City needed $5,000,000 in the City treasury immediately to pay current expenses.[42]

During January 1933, relief expenditures reached a new high of $295,237. The number of families on the relief rolls was 13,526, representing a 13% increase over December 1932. February figures indicated that there was to be no let up in the Depression despite the new Administration in Washington. The month's relief expenditure was $347,886, an amount 50% above the relief expenditure for all of 1929. The number of families on the relief rolls reached 14,558, a 7% increase over the previous month.[43] Besides these families on relief, a spot check by the Welfare Federation and the Associated Catholic Charities indicated that 3,361 men and 407 women were either homeless or transient in early February.[44]

Newark's March 1 municipal payroll was met only because of a $970,000 check from Public Service Electric and Gas for advance payment of City taxes.[45] A comparison by the Evening News of the March 15, 1932, and March 15, 1933, municipal payrolls disclosed some interesting facts. On March 15, 1932, 6,297 municipal employees were paid $472,125. On March 15, 1933, 6,149 employees were paid $427,768. The payroll decrease was due to the July 1932 salary reduction ordinance. The

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[42] Ibid., January 10, 1933, 1.

[43] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[44] Evening News, February 4, 1933, 5.

[45] Ibid., March 1, 1933, 1.

small employee reduction was due to deaths and retirements. The Evening News said that the number of municipal employees was not cut because of the election, social ties, and the bad example such a cut would set for industry. The paper claimed that many needless employees and advisors were still on the City payroll.[46] It was disclosures like this that no doubt hastened the State's decision to take over the administration of relief in Newark.

During March 1933, 15,703 families received relief from the City, for an increase of about 8% over February. The relief expenditure was $338,273, for a decrease of $9,000 from February.[47] This small decrease was probably because of the much lower coal bill for the City during March. Towards the end of this month, Newark was so pressed for relief funds that a $650,000 bond issue for welfare work was proposed by the City Commission. However, the Commission was advised that such an issue could no longer be sold. Bankers were insisting that Newark must finance its relief work on a "pay as you go" basis.[48] Further efforts to float the bond issue failed; a suggestion that scrip be issued by the City was rejected because the banks would not accept it. Mayor Congleton expressed concern over the City's ability to meet the April 1 payroll.[49]

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[46] Ibid., March 27, 1933, 6.

[47] Newark Department of Public Welfare, Monthly Work Sheets.

[48] Evening News, March 22, 1933, 1.

[49] Ibid., March 23, 1933, 1.

On March 29, 1933, the State announced that the administration of all relief work in Newark could be taken out of the City's hands, and put under the complete control of the N.J.E.R.A. The City Commission approved a resolution declaring the City unable to supply relief and asking the N.J.E.R.A. to take over relief operations in Newark as of April 1. The main changes under the new system were:

(1) The Department of Public Works would no longer have any relief function (no authority at all in the administration of relief in Newark);

(2) The Overseer of the Poor and his staff of 227 (this staff had increased from 134 in July 1932) were to be released from City employment on furlough and would be under the employ of the N.J.E.R.A.;

(3) The Department of the Public Welfare, thus removed from the City government, would move out of City Hall into another building where all relief work would be concentrated;

(4) Newark would no longer make a monthly appropriation for relief work. The State would pay all costs of relief work, and

(5) All control of relief would be in the hands of Franklin Conklin, Jr., Municipal Director for the N.J.E.R.A., and his staff.[50]

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[50] Ibid., March 29, 1933, 1.

State relief officials were willing to let the record stand that the change was made because Newark could no longer afford its relief appropriations. However, the idea for the change did not originate in City Hall. Rather, State relief officials felt they could serve considerable money by handling relief in Newark themselves. They wished to keep politics out of relief as much as possible. It was also felt the new plan would centralize relief work eliminating the divided authority between City and State which existed previously.[51]

Thus, three years and five months after the start of the depression Newark's private, semi-official and municipal relief agencies found themselves without the main burden of relief in Newark. The takeover by the State of all administration of relief in Newark was entirely justified. Public and private relief agencies in the City had neither the financial resources nor the manpower to satisfy the needs of Newark's needy and unemployed. The State in extending aid to Newark certainly had the right and indeed even the obligation, to supervise the expenditure of State funds in the City, even if it meant divorcing the Department of Welfare from Newark's government. The fact that the State found this move necessary does not reflect adversely on Newark (albeit the administration of relief by Newark certainly had its weak points). Relief agencies in the City were fighting against impossible odds. Relief agencies in municipalities both throughout the State and the Country were fighting against the same odds. It is sufficient to

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[51] Ibid.

say that the responsibility for the care of Newark's needy, once the City could no longer meet that responsibility, lay with the State, just as the ultimate responsibility for Newark's needy lay with the Federal Government, once the State was no longer able to meet it.

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Unpublished Material

Franklin Conklin, Jr. The following four items are to be found at the Office of Franklin Conklin, Jr., Newark, New Jersey, in files marked "Unemployment Relief Committee-General" and "Citizens' Relief Committee":

Letter of December 29, 1931 from Thomas J. Puryear to Fred Burnett.

Memorandum of January 27, 1932.

Memorandum of February 20, 1933 to Franklin Conklin, Jr. from Cordelle K. Ballard.

Minutes of November 29, 1932 meeting of the Block-Aid and Commissary Plan Committee of the Citizens' Relief Committee.

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Welfare Federation of Newark, Agency Allotment Payments, 1928-1935. These are sheets with yearly breakdowns of the amounts given to each participating agency in the Welfare Federation. They are in a folder marked "Agency Allotment Payments" at the Welfare Federation of Newark, Newark, New Jersey.

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